Abstract

This thesis deals with the way in which lay medical culture was perceived by literate élites in seventeenth-century England. It seeks to reappraise an existing historical picture in which the growth of scientific rationalism is seen as leading to a growing divide between the mentalities and medical practices of élites and those of the rest of society.

Rather than treating these two groups as polar opposites the thesis examines the means by which they interacted. This is chiefly based on an examination of commonplace books which, from the Renaissance onwards, were central to the way in which literate laymen and women recorded information both from printed and manuscript material and from talking with others. The introductory chapter looks at the various ways in which the meaning of words such as 'lay' and 'vulgar' was constructed by their users. Chapter 2 goes on to describe the manner in which commonplace books contributed to the vulgarisation of medical knowledge amongst private individuals, at a family level, within local communities, and beyond. Chapters 3 and 4 continue this theme by looking at the collection of material within the institutional context of first, the Hartlib Circle, and second, the Royal Society. In both cases, it is argued, the individuals concerned were motivated by an increased emphasis on simple empiricism (instead of textual dogmatism) and on public utility. Chapters 5 and 6 address the question of cultural bifurcation by considering criticism of lay medicine as a product both of a far wider political and theological debate over superstition and the place of the supernatural, and of a growing emphasis on gentility and taste.
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A List of the Abbreviations Used in the Footnotes

Bacon, *Works*  

BL Add  
British Library Additional Manuscripts

BL Evelyn  
British Library Evelyn Manuscripts

BL Sloane  
British Library Sloane Manuscripts

Boyle, *Works*  

BL Royal  
British Library Royal Manuscripts

Browne,  
Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, (ed.) Robin Robbins, 2 Volumes,  

Foster, *Alumni*  

Gloucester MS  
Gloucester Cathedral Library Manuscripts

HP  
Hartlib Papers, University of Sheffield. All references are taken from *The Hartlib Papers: a Complete Text and Image Database of the Papers of Samuel Hartlib (c.1600-1662)* (2 CD-Rom discs and User Guide, Ann Arbor, 1995)

Hunter, *Aubrey*  

Hunter, *Science and Society*  

Hunter, *ETNS Society*  

OED  
*Oxford English Dictionary*

Oldenburg, *Correspondence*  

R.S.E.L  
Royal Society Early Letters

RS MS  
Royal Society Manuscripts

Stubbs I  

Stubbs II  

Venn  
J.A. Venn (ed.), *Alumni Cantabrigienses*, 10 Volumes, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1922-54)

Webster  

Wellcome MS  
Wellcome Library Manuscripts

A Note about the Text

All dates are given as they appear, except that the year has been taken to begin on January 1st rather than March 25th. Only works published after 1800 are referenced in full (place of publication, publisher, and date) in the footnotes. Full references for all works can be found in the bibliography at the end of the thesis.
Illustrations and Tables

Figure 1. Wellcome MS 757, f.21v from the commonplace book of Augustine Spinney and Henry Fowler  
Figure 2. HP 28/2/14A Samuel Hartlib’s Ephemerides, 1651  
Table 1. Medical manuscripts belonging to Henry Fowler
Introduction

Writers, Preachers, Moralists, Rhetoricians, Orators and Poets...depending upon invention deduce their mediums from all things whatsoever...they take up popular conceits, and from traditions unjustifiable or really false, illustrate matters of undeniable truth. Wherein although their intentions be sincere, and that course not much condemnable, yet doth it notoriously strengthen common errors, and authorise opinions injurious unto truth.

Thomas Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica: OR, ENQUIRIES into Very Many Received Tenents and Commonly Presumed Truths*, Sixth edition (London: J.R. for Nath. Ekins, 1672), Book I, Chapter IX, p.54

Tradition has in no Instance so clearly evinced her Faithfulness as in the transmitting of vulgar rites and popular Opinions.

Of these, when we are desirous of tracing them backwards to their Origin, many lose themselves in Antiquity.

They have indeed travelled down to us through a long Succession of Years, and the greatest part of them, it is not improbable, will be of perpetual Observation: for the generality look back with superstitious Veneration on the Ages of their Forefathers: and Authorities, that are grey with Time, seldom fail of commanding those filial Honours, claimed even by the Appearance of hoary old age.


The Norwich physician Thomas Browne (1605-82) and the Newcastle curate John Brand (1744-1806) had much in common. Both were interested in the mechanisms by which ancient knowledge survived, albeit in a fabulous or vulgarised form, into the present day. Both authors pointed to credulity and an adherence to authority, written or, more often than not, oral, as factors which allowed for the perpetuation of myths. To varying degrees both authors regarded the Catholic Church as central to this process — a conviction that Brand held in common with his own authority and fellow Newcastle clergyman Henry Bourne (1694-1733) and with sixteenth-century Protestant writers such as Reginald Scot.¹ Both authors examined practices and ideas that were associated with medicine whether in the form of amulets, charms, plants, or animals and minerals. Brand borrowed heavily from Browne’s *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* as well as works by his near contemporaries, Robert Burton (1577-1640), John Ray (1627-1705), and John Aubrey (1626-96).

¹ Henry Bourne’s *Antiquitates Vulgares; or, the Antiquities of the Common People*, (Newcastle: J. White, 1725) provided the basis for Brand’s work. Brand incorporated most of its text within his book. On both authors see, Richard Dorson, *British Folklorists*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1965), pp.10-26
This, however, is where the connection between the two authors ends. Browne and Brand were separated by more than just one hundred and fifty years. They were separated both by a different approach and a different relationship with their subject matter. Browne’s work began with the Fall of Man and the deception of Adam and Eve by the Devil. His was an account of human error, susceptibility to which was ‘The common infirmity of Human Nature’. Though he criticised the ‘Multitude’ for their ‘Erroneous disposition’, his main focus was ‘learned ignorance’ and with it folly and human pride. Fables and impostures were started by authors such as Pliny and Aesop and then passed by print and word of mouth to a credulous and receptive populace. His work is one of both Renaissance and Erasmian humanism, the central paradox being that Browne was part of the very culture that he questioned.²

In contrast, Brand was interested in ‘useful knowledge of Mankind’ and the ‘wisdom’ which might ‘be extracted from the Folies and Superstitions of our forefathers.’ Citing Thomas Fuller (though John Locke would have done just as well) he blamed mothers who allowed children ‘foolish superstitions’ in order to keep them from those which he regarded as more dangerous. The effects of this maternal error were compounded in those who failed to obtain a ‘liberal education’.³ In Brand’s opinion ignorance and error were remediable. It is far easier to draw parallels between Browne and Robert Burton, François Rabelais, or Michel de Montaigne, than it is with late eighteenth-century churchmen such as Brand.⁴

By 1813, when Henry Ellis (like Brand, Secretary to the Society of Antiquaries), published a posthumous but revised edition, the breach with Browne’s approach had grown wider and developed new characteristics. Reviewing the two volume text, The Quarterly Review commented,

³ John Brand, Observations on Popular Antiquities: Chiefly Illustrating the Origin of Our Vulgar Customs, Ceremonies, and Superstitions, arranged and revised, with additions, by Henry Ellis, 2 Volumes, (London: Printed for F.C. and J. Rivington, etc, 1813), pp. xi-x. This edition included a revised version of Brand’s ‘preface’ which was dated August 1795.
⁴ Parallels do, however, exist particularly in the use of Burton’s physiological account of folly which persisted into the eighteenth century as ‘enthusiasm’. On this point see below Chapter 6.
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There are few departments of literature which have a better claim upon our attention. Customs, arbitrary and unmeaning in the judgment of the careless observer, guide us as surely as the pages of the historian. Nor are the wildest superstitions to be rejected. They supply the want of historical evidence...connect the religion...and...the philosophies of one age, with the follies of the next.\(^5\)

So while the bulk of society had moved forward, customs and habits that had once been part of everyday life remained in scant, vestigial forms to remind readers of the way things used to be in Browne's day. As Brand put it in 1795, quoting Sir John Sinclair's *Statistical Account of Scotland* (Edinburgh: 1793),

> The Spirit of Credulity, which arises out of Ignorance, and which over-ran the country is now greatly worn away; and the belief in Witches, in Fairies, and other ideal beings, although not entirely discarded, is gradually dying-out.

Alternatively, the survival, or as David Cannadine has suggested, the 'invention' of customs, could be adopted for patriotic purposes.\(^6\) As an 1815 advertisement for Ellis' edition proclaimed, 'With the return of peace, a return of our ancient wholesome sports and innocent pleasures may likewise take place.' Again, surviving customs were there to remind people of the historic past.

By 1905, the approach to Brand's work and its subject matter had changed again. Writing in his preface to a re-ordered and revised version of Ellis' text, W. Carew Hazlitt described Brand as 'a zealous collector of old and curious books' and noted how the 'anecdotal character' of his text had been superseded by 'the judicial conciseness of [Henry T.] Buckle in his *History of Civilization* and the rhetorical and imposing periods of Macaulay.' Whilst Ellis' edition of Brand had been aimed at historians, Hazlitt's edition (which included many of Brand's citations) aimed to provide data for scientists. As he announced,

> Since the first recension of the archaeological labours of Blount, Bourne, Brand, and Ellis was published by me, the critical and comparative study of Popular Mythology has under the auspices of the Folk-Lore Society been elevated into a science.

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Introduction

Like Brand, Hazlitt saw superstition as sign of poor education or 'low mental development arising in no doubt, in great measure from a faulty system of teaching both in a secular and clerical direction' and recorded his hope that 'Modern principles of instruction will gradually extinguish most, if not all, of the foolish prejudices and superstitions recorded here'.

This thesis is concerned with lay medical culture as it was perceived and made use of by people living during Thomas Browne's lifetime and shortly afterwards. It is about their perception of historical change and social, cultural, and religious difference and not the attitudes and opinions of those who lived later. Yet at the same time it is appropriate to examine here the approach taken by writers such as Brand, Ellis, and Hazlitt since their methodology and their findings, whether 'historical' or, 'scientific' have had a major impact on the study of lay medicine, though for the nineteenth century and for much of the twentieth century this took place outside academic history, among those who would have identified with Hazlitt's claim for his work to be regarded as scientific. Understanding how this gulf between the professional historian and the amateur folklorist came to exist and how it was narrowed is central to any appreciation of the historiography of lay medical culture.

Anthropology, folklore, and 'primitive medicine'

The take-up of the 'scientific' folklore is typified by W.G. Black, an English doctor who assembled a 'store of facts' which he regarded not as anecdotal but as the sort of Baconian inductive science which many of his fellow Victorians should emulate. Writing in 1883 he expressed his hope that,

...illustrations of man's intellectual history will be found by study of collections of classified facts, and that the investigation of spells and amulets, of witcheries, may not be unworthy of systematic analysis.10

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7 This advertisement is inserted inside the British Library's copy of Brand. Shelfmark 142 e 1,2
9 The wider context for such aspirations is discussed in Richard Yeo, Defining Science: William Whewell, Natural Knowledge, and Public Debate in Early Victorian Britain, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)
Like Hazlitt, Black made frequent reference to Browne, Burton, Aubrey, and Brand, as well as other authors such as Pliny the Elder, Kenelm Digby and Robert Boyle. In each case he removed his findings from their historical context, quoting them in a commonplace fashion and ignoring any possible incongruities between them. Many were recorded as strange tales or examples of ‘olden England’.11

Like Hazlitt, Black was a member of the Folk-Lore Society. This London-based society had been founded in 1878 and took its cue from the rapidly growing fields of ethnology and, to a lesser extent, anthropology.12 Many of the founder members of the Folk-Lore Society were already members of the Ethnology Society of London which had been founded in 1843 but which really burgeoned in the 1860s and 1870s and had contributed to the growing debate about man’s place in nature.13 Most notable amongst these members were Edward B. Tylor and Sir John Lubbock – the latter being quoted on numerous occasions in Black’s text. Fundamental, though not unique to the work of Tylor and Lubbock, was the technique of cross-cultural analysis and the connected notion of ‘survivals’. These were based on the assumption that all societies passed through similar stages of development on their way to rational, scientific thought.14 Clues about earlier stages in a society’s development could be gained by examining other societies where ‘primitive’ practices still existed. As Black put it, ‘Instances might be gathered from all quarters of the world where man in some measure retains the primitive thought, and traces of the belief may be found in modern folk-lore.’15 This framework of reference, based as it was on progressivism and the idea of cultural evolution, had parallels in contemporary thinking about technology, biology (and, in particular, mental development), linguistics, and history.16 Black challenged Herbert Spencer’s theory that

11 Black, Folk-Medicine, p.27
14 These ideas were articulated in Edward B. Tylor, Researches into the Early History of Mankind and the Development of Civilization, (London: John Murray, 1865) and Primitive Culture, (London: John Murray, 1871). There are many precursors of this idea, perhaps the most notable of whom was Auguste Comte.
15 Black, Folk-Medicine, p.4
16 Black cited W.E.H. Lecky’s History of England in the Eighteenth Century. Lecky’s earlier work The History of the Rise and Influence of the Spirit of Rationalism in Europe, (London: n.p., 1865) was heavily influenced by ideas of progressivism and cultural evolution. For a detailed discussion of
primitive man had attributed the causes of disease and death to spirits of the dead. He suggested instead, using arguments similar to those of Tylor, that primitive man attributed diseases to the supernatural powers of a human enemy or to a spirit found in animate and inanimate nature.\(^\text{17}\)

These features help to explain the apparent oddity of Black's work to contemporary historians. Because Black was interested in tracing overall patterns of human development his chronology is not only huge but lacking the specificity that is central to our expectations of useful historical material. His analysis was both cross-cultural and cross-chronological. Browne and Aubrey were assessed in relation to the history of civilisation and not seventeenth-century England. Their work was used to give examples of ignorance, error, vulgarity, and superstition as they were viewed in the late nineteenth century, on the assumption that these labels were timeless.

Similar patterns are present in the work of Black's fellow folklorist Hilderic Friend and the Glasgow physician Dan McKenzie. Friend dedicated his study of the folklore of flowers to the Oxford philologist Max Müller and made comparisons between sources as diverse as John Gerard's *Herbal* (1628) and his own field investigations in Malaya.\(^\text{18}\) McKenzie expanded the four-fold division of human history that had been laid down by Lubbock by dividing his own study of the *Evolution of Scientific Medicine* into eight 'epochs'. These included an 'Ancient Epoch', a 'Pre-Scientific or Transitional Epoch', which he dated from 1550 to 1800, and a 'Scientific or Modern Epoch' which he dated from 1800 onwards.\(^\text{19}\) McKenzie's 'epochs' were an indication of different stages of human development and where dates were given they related to what he saw as the Western European model or more specifically, the thoughts and actions of an educated élite. Outside this social group and its geographical area people still behaved as if they were living in an earlier age. As McKenzie remarked,

> In the age we live in, scientific medicine has achieved successes so triumphant that mysticism would seem to have for ever departed. But we must not deceive


\(^{18}\) Hilderic Friend, *Flowers and Flower Lore*, 2 Volumes, (London: S. Sonnenschein, 1883)

ourselves. Superstitions are native to every nation and to every man, and outside
the ranks of medical men mysticism still boldly challenges comparison with
science, particularly in the domain of treatment.\textsuperscript{20}

In McKenzie’s opinion the medicine of male university-trained professionals was
accountable for progress in therapeutics. As we shall see, this claim had antecedents
both in the early modern period and (though without the link to university education) in
antiquity. In McKenzie’s case we can link his claims for ‘scientific medicine’ to those
that were being made by the nascent medical profession in nineteenth and early
twentieth-century Britain.\textsuperscript{21} This involved both diminishing previous practices to the
level of primitivism and elevating the method of individuals such as Hippocrates to that
of the ‘scientific or modern age’.\textsuperscript{22} This had precedents both in the Carlylean notion of
heroes and in the Renaissance idea of exempla and its application in the late seventeenth
and eighteenth centuries to early histories of medicine.

Medicine was associated with science which McKenzie defined in terms of man’s
relationship with the natural world. Those ‘uncivilised’ groups that were unable to
control or at least predict the ‘mysterious powers’ of weather resorted to what he termed
‘priestly craft’. Whilst Egyptian ‘priest-physicians’ and Catholic monks were to be
thanked for preserving what medical art they had, it was those who had learned to
master nature and predict its behaviour that were regarded as scientists or rationalists.

McKenzie’s work, like that of Tylor, brought with it a specific model for the production
and transmission of knowledge and ideas over time in any given society. Innovations
and rationalisations were always the product of an élite group in society. In most
instances these groups were based in towns and cities, an idea that tied in well with the
revival of classical notions of political participation and civilisation. As time went on,
new ideas were diffused or popularised, gradually making their way to the less educated
in society. At any given moment, there were people who either retained their
attachment to an older system of ideas or who were yet to learn about innovations.

\textsuperscript{20} McKenzie, \textit{The Infancy of Medicine}, p. 10
\textsuperscript{21} W.F. Bynum and Roy Porter (eds), \textit{Medical Fringe and Medical Orthodoxy 1750-1850}, (London:
University Press, 1983)
\textsuperscript{22} McKenzie, \textit{The Infancy of Medicine}, p.x.
Introduction

These people were to be found most frequently in the countryside aloof from educationalists and, in the case of McKenzie’s complaint, university-trained physicians.\(^{23}\) This view either enforced fears about rural ignorance that were held by Liberal progressives like Lubbock or, where ignorance was replaced with notions of naivety or purity, served to create a golden or idyllic view of the countryside. It produced both a static, homogenised view of medicine as practised in the countryside and diverted attention away from the existence of ‘superstition’ in towns.\(^{24}\) The discrepancy described by McKenzie, Black, and others, between the producers of knowledge and its recipients is suggestive of what would in the 1950s become known as ‘cultural lag’.\(^{25}\)

**Folklore, ethnology, anthropology, and historiography**

Tracing the impact of these trends in nineteenth-century ethnology, anthropology and folklore through to twentieth-century historiography is a difficult process. Models for the transmission and reception of ideas have political implications and to a certain extent the receptivity of a historical community to these models is based both on its outlook and the political situation in general. In the Italian context the notion that language, ideas, and values come from a political élite and are then forced upon a recalcitrant populace who in turn produce a counter-culture is most closely associated with the writings of Antonio Gramsci.\(^{26}\) Looking at the work of historians associated with the *Quaderni Storici* group, and in particular Carlo Ginzburg, we can see Gramsci’s concept of cultural hegemony at play. Ginzburg’s early work focused on the theme of ‘high and low’, that is the freedom or lack of freedom to pursue knowledge among élites and common people living in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe. Elsewhere he was interested in the mechanisms by which Biblical and Aristotelian accounts of cosmogenesis and Quranic accounts of Paradise went through subsequent vulgarisations in the Middle Ages and Counter-Reformation Europe. Though he focused on cheap

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25 The term was coined by Marshall Clagett in *Greek Science in Antiquity*, (New York: Abelard-Schuman, 1955)
print (itself a technological category), Ginzburg also looked at oral culture as a mechanism for the vulgarisation of ideas. Superstition was a category laid down by the Church to deal with heterodox and vulgarised ideas. The adoption by historians of Gramsci's model was at least in part an attack on the Catholic Church and its position in contemporary Italian politics.

In the British context the receptivity of historians to models, concepts, and methods derived from ethnology, anthropology, and folklore can be linked both to the professional academic situation that emerged at the end of the nineteenth century and the historical community's overall receptivity to theory. Though notable exceptions existed, not least in Scotland, folklore (as opposed to anthropology) did not gain a strong footing in British universities. As anthropologists rejected, in the 1920s and 1930s, the theory of 'survivals' in favour of 'functionalism', so the gap between their activities and the by-now largely amateur folklorists grew. Likewise, historians at the turn of the nineteenth century were also suspicious of folklorists and their theories and methods. These suspicions were typified by a review that was written by F.W. Maitland in which he mocked George Gomme (who was at that time President of the Folklore Society) for his attempt to apply fieldwork (in this case the interviewing of elderly villagers) and the theory of survivals to the study of English village life. Coming from a tradition dominated by the use of written and, in particular, legal documents, Maitland could see little use for Gomme's methods.

As the American sociologist C. Wright Mills pointed out, the distance between historians and those working in other more theoretical disciplines reached its peak in the 1930s and 1940s when British historians in particular adopted a twofold iconoclasm towards theory. The first criticism was levelled at the philosophies of Comte and Marx, Weber and Spencer and their tendency to manipulate historical evidence into a "trans-historical straight-jacket". The second criticism was directed at those who sought to

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construct 'a systematic theory of "the nature of man and society." Implicit in both these criticisms was a rejection of the positivism that was present in Comte and Marx and which (however indirectly) was also present in the histories of Buckle and Lecky, as well as those of Black and McKenzie.

Suspicious of theory and, like sociologists and anthropologists themselves, concerned about disciplinary boundaries, British historians in the main followed the example of Sir Lewis Namier and applied a rigorous archival approach to complex political questions. A similar approach was taken by German historians (who remained attached primarily to the model set by Leopold von Ranke and who eschewed Weber) and by the majority of French historians, who until the foundation of the journal *Annales* by Marc Bloch and Lucien Febvre in 1929, pursued political questions. This landmark involved a specific assault on the ideals of von Ranke and a suggestion by Bloch that historians should adopt a 'regressive method' which would take in the findings of ethnographers and folklorists. Added to this was an interest in the anthropological work of Marcel Mauss (who had written on the theme of magic), the linguistic theories of Ferdinand de Saussure, and later (and perhaps most notably) the idea of *longue durée* or long-term structural change over either a small or (in the case of Fernand Braudel) a wide geographical area.

As Toby Gelfand has detailed, the *Annales* school has had a considerable effect on the way in which the history of medicine has been written. While particular attention has


30 Skinner, 'Introduction', p.3; Peter Burke, *History and Social Theory*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1992), p.6; Adrian Wilson, 'A Critical Portrait of Social History', *Rethinking Social History. English Society 1570-1920 and its Interpretation*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1993), p.11. The British interest in political questions was part of the inheritance by professional academic historians of the tradition of State historiography. The most obvious exception is G.M. Trevelyan who famously commented that 'Social history might be defined negatively as the history of the people with the politics left out.'

31 There were calls from outside Europe for a 'new history' which would involve the findings and methods of anthropologists, economists, psychologists and sociologists, most notably in the work of the American James Harvey Robinson who published *The New History* in 1912; cf. Peter Burke, 'Overture: the New History' in Peter Burke (ed.), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995), p.5

been paid by Jacques Le Goff and Emmanuel Le Roy Ladourie to the impact of the plague and other epidemics (topics well suited to discussion in terms of geography), more recently such scholars as Jacques Gélis and Françoise Loux (herself an ethnologist) have looked at topics as fascinating as childbirth, infancy, and popular medical knowledge. Though, in this last instance, Loux focused on printed material from the nineteenth century, her focus on the spread of medical material from learned texts to chapbooks, almanacs, and other self-help books will be of importance to this thesis.  

Ironically perhaps, given their distance from the mainstream academic history, in the 1930s and 1940s a number of historians of medicine were themselves also beginning to assess the usefulness of ethnography to their subject. Erwin Ackerknecht, himself trained as an ethnographer, rejected the thesis (put forward by McKenzie and others) that the roots of modern medicine could be found in 'primitive medicine'. 'Folk medicine', was not the same as 'primitive medicine', the former being, in his opinion, largely a vulgarised form of Galenism. Similarly Ackerknecht's own teacher Henry Sigerist commented (in a way that perhaps seems ordinary to us now but probably was not so in the early 1950s) that 'theories of medicine are products of their own time, in their cultural setting'. This said, neither Ackernecht nor Sigerist was keen to relate his findings to modern medicine and neither dealt specifically with the early modern period, a period which they all deemed central to the emergence of 'scientific' medicine. 

The impact of anthropological ideas on historians dealing with the early modern period and questions pertinent to this thesis can be seen most clearly in the work of Keith Thomas and Peter Burke. Thomas in particular admired the *Annales* school and saw

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36 Also of importance is the work of Alan Macfarlane who (as Thomas' student) pioneered the use of functional anthropology in the study of witchcraft trials and Mary Douglas whose work on purity and pollution is evident in Thomas' treatment of the evil eye and Neoplatonic theories of witchcraft.
social anthropology (along with social psychology) as alternatives to the application of Marxist theory to historical questions which had been prominent during the 1960s in the work of (amongst others) Christopher Hill and E.P. Thompson.37

Both Burke and Thomas engaged with questions concerning the diffusion of knowledge and social differentiation. Both made use of the data collected by folklorists, ethnologists and anthropologists.38 Though Thomas expressed his methodological debt to social anthropologists such as E.E. Evans-Pritchard and Max Gluckman, his work also shows an attachment to older ideas of 'primitivism' and 'survivals', and in combination with the latter, 'cultural lag'.39 This is particularly evident in his account of 'the decline of magic' where Thomas like his predecessors conflated classical commentaries on popular 'superstition' and the nuanced writings of Browne and Aubrey with nineteenth-century students of folklore concluding (in the case of Browne and Aubrey) that 'despite their tolerance towards the old ways, such men were acutely conscious of belonging to a different mental world'. In each instance the 'old ways' persisted but only in rural backwaters.40 These areas were defined by their impermeability or resistance to new ideas.

According to Thomas' overall thesis, belief, whether in the form of religion or magic (and he pointed to the way in which contemporaries blurred the distinction), was linked to man's relationship with the environment.41 An inability to control the environment or

39 This criticism was made by Hildred Geertz in 'An Anthropology of Religion and Magic, I', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, Vol. 6, No. 1, (Summer 1975), pp.71-89. Thomas acknowledged that the word 'primitive' might have 'condescending evolutionary overtones' in his reply 'An Anthropology of Religion and Magic, II', Journal of Interdisciplinary History, Vol. 6, No. 1, (Summer 1975), p.93. In Thomas' defence both E.P. Thompson and Jonathan Barry have noted that he used anthropology to provide analogies and not to prove a point (for which he used numerous historical examples). Jonathan Barry, 'Introduction: Keith Thomas and the Problem of Witchcraft' in Jonathan Barry, Marianne Hester, and Gareth Roberts (eds), Witchcraft in Early Modern Europe: Studies in Culture and Belief, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p.6.
40 Thomas, Religion and Decline, p.798. A perceptive critique of Thomas' use of survivals can be found in Willem de Blécourt, 'On the Continuation of Witchcraft' in Barry et al. (eds), op cit., pp.335-52
41 Thomas, Religion and Decline, Prologue. As Clark points out, Annales historians such as Fernand Braudel also focused on the environment as the key factor in early modern lives though
predict its effects both heightened the impact of a religion based on divine providence, and produced an elaborate array of magical formulae and charms with which to keep away pests and protect crops and livestock. Secularisation took place as people developed strategies with which to meliorate the worst effects of flooding, fires, accidents, and crop failures. Insurance and personal savings, both by-products of a self-help ideology, gradually replaced intercessionary prayers and magic. Running alongside these changes was the development of a natural philosophical and theological model which used secondary causes to explain phenomena. While this model was incomplete in the early modern period, it made explanations based on prime causes such as God, angels, and the devil, unlikely for all but miraculous (and by definition supernatural) events.

Potent though Thomas’ thesis is, it works on the assumption that insurance and other forms of security and hazard did not really penetrate those rural areas where people were perhaps most worried about their relationship with the environment. Also problematic is the lack of consideration that Thomas paid to the possibility that people relied on both magical and non-magical means (such as insurance) to protect their livelihood. This omission may have occurred as a result of Thomas’ anthropological model. By centring his work on ideas of intellectual plausibility and the social or psychological usefulness of ideas Thomas removed the potential for pluralism.

Like Thomas’ Religion and the Decline of Magic, Burke’s Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe also focused on what he suggested was the growing asymmetry between two cultures. Burke termed these ‘elite’ and ‘popular’ or the ‘little tradition’ and the ‘great tradition’. Though the manner in which asymmetry emerged was different to that suggested by Thomas it is notable that Burke was influenced by the anthropologists working on ‘closed’ peasant societies. The ‘little tradition’ was what remained after the

without making any connection between this and the belief in magic or religion. Clark, ‘The Annales Historians’, p.192
42 Thomas, Religion and Decline, p.777. In contrast to the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, Thomas affirmed the belief of early modern people in the effectiveness of magic.
43 Thomas, Religion and Decline, p.779
44 Thomas, Religion and Decline, p.769
45 Barry, ‘Introduction’, p.25
46 Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, p.28
47 Burke’s debts to anthropologists and social theorists are many and varied. In this case his model was Robert Redfield’s Peasant Society and Culture: an Anthropological Approach to Civilization, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956). A useful assessment of Burke’s thesis is Tim
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process of differentiation (what Burke termed 'the withdrawal of the upper classes') had been completed. It was this 'little tradition' that was 'discovered', or perhaps more accurately, sought after and (re)constructed, by collectors of proverbs, antiquarians and folklorists and which, in places and with caution, Burke used as historical evidence.

Burke's account of differentiation was complex and took in, with modification, many of the assumptions that were present in existing historiography and social theory. It encompassed social, political, religious, as well as technological change. 'The Triumph of Lent' was an attempt by religious reformers to impose their value system onto 'The World of Carnival'. The godly (and for Burke this included both Protestant reformers such as William Perkins and Jesuits such as Bellarmine) encouraged their congregations to withdraw from what had once been truly 'popular' modes of expression and to engage in what Burke (quoting Weber) called 'this worldly asceticism'. As in Thomas' account, the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, each its own manner, also brought about a fundamental shift in eschatology (what Weber termed 'the disenchantment of the world') which further alienated the mass of the population from the reformers. Just as 'vulgar' referred to common or erroneous views of nature, 'superstition' defined what was a misinterpretation of scripture and what was acceptable or unacceptable behaviour. These rulings were disseminated both from the pulpit and by cheap print.

Lay medicine and the historiography of popular culture

48 Burke, Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe, p.213. There are strong parallels between Burke's account and that offered by Johann Huizinga in Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-element in Culture, (Boston, MA. : Beacon Press, 1955; orig. published in Switzerland, 1944). For Huizinga the triumph of science (so often at the heart of accounts of the early modern period) involved the suppression of the ludic and the triumph of Lent over the carnival. In Huizinga's view science and godliness shared a commitment to seriousness and gravitas. Cf. Paula Findlen, 'Between Carnival and Lent: The Scientific Revolution at the Margins of Culture', Configurations, Vol. 6, no. 2 (Spring 1998), pp.243-267. There are also parallels between Burke's thesis and that of Norbert Elias in The Civilizing Process (orig. 1939)
Introduction

There is much in the historiography of popular culture that is pertinent to this thesis. As was illustrated in the opening section of this introduction, lay medical culture has been analysed within a framework that includes secularisation and 'the decline of magic' as well as structural changes such as the withdrawal of sections of society from particular types of medical practice and the causal explanations and social and political characteristics that were associated with them. If, in more recent years, historians have tended to focus on the social and the political rather than the epistemological it has not been without continued attention to the notion of a withdrawal from 'popular culture' and a change in cosmology on the part of those who withdrew. Historians have simply become more aware of the dangers of applying criteria developed during and after the Enlightenment to an early modern context.

Materials collected by folklorists are gaining a new currency among historians working on the idea of a 'Long Reformation' and the findings from these researches are relevant to those interested in healing, though it should be added that finding evidence for what the continuation of 'Catholic' healing in nineteenth-century England provides only clues and not substantial evidence for early modern practices. The theory of 'survivals' will always be weakened by anachronism and by the static picture that it provides.

Dangers also exist in the use of the writings of Protestant (in the English context, hard-line Calvinist or 'Puritan') Reformers to provide evidence for 'superstitious' medical practices not least of all because it was they, rather than the majority of those who practised medicine, who defined and recognised the line between heterodoxy and orthodoxy. These sources were frequently written either from the point of view of conflict, in which case the gap between the godly and the profane is accentuated, or from a missionary standpoint with the expectation of contrition or agreement (if the

51 Roy Porter, 'Medicine and the Decline of Magic', *Cheiron Newsletter*, (Spring 1988), pp.40-52. The link between politics (or more accurately law) and intellectual plausibility has been most convincingly described by Ian Bostridge in *Witchcraft and its Transformations c.1650-c.1750*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).


reader was also a hard-line Calvinist). Also problematic is the assumption that because these texts exist, their authors were regarded as reformers by society in general. Firebrand reformers and godly artisans such as Nehemiah Wallington often came 'from below', from sections of society that were outside the political élite and as likely to be identified as heterodox or disruptive as the targets of their own diatribe. This was particularly so in the latter half of the seventeenth century when religious immoderacy was compared with madness and 'enthusiasm'.

Texts need to be interpreted with an eye both to their prospective audience and to the responses they produced. This is particularly true in the case of medical texts which appear to deal with the unlearned or superstitious. As David Harley has argued in the case of the Northampton physician James Hart, these texts, like those that deal with heterodox religious practices, are frequently the work of hard-line Calvinists. Rather than being aimed at female practitioners, quacks, and astrologers (though he also disliked them), Hart's invective was directed at priest-physicians and in particular those who neglected their pastoral duties in order to practise medicine for profit. His attack on Paracelsianism, astrology, and empiricism (which in some modern accounts are equated with lay medicine) was a typical expression of Calvinism. Whether it was scripture for religion or Galenism for medicine, Calvinists looked to ancient texts for orthodoxy and Hart based most of his arguments against priest-physicians on scriptural exegesis. Likewise, the writings of Hart's Calvinist predecessor John Cotta should be interpreted as an attack on the moral failings of both mountebanks and quacks, who exploited the gullibility of poor patients, and of learned physicians who, through their greed and lack of charity drove them to these practitioners. Also to be kept in mind is the fact that since antiquity divides had existed between practitioners who espoused a ratio or method based on an understanding of the four humours and the six non-naturals,

54 Eamon Duffy, 'The Godly and the Multitude in Stuart England', The Seventeenth Century, Vol. 1, No. 1, (1986), pp.31-55. Similar methodological problems exist in the use of trial or Inquisition records where historically the assumption of wrongdoing (and with it the need for contrition) existed.


56 David Harley, 'James Hart of Northampton and the Calvinist Critique of Priest-Physicians: An Unpublished Polemic of the Early 1620s', Medical History, Vol. 42, (1998), pp.362-386. Harley (p.365) suggests that Richard Napier (who was both a priest and medical practitioner who used astrology and natural magic) was a potential target for Hart's invective. Napier lived in Great Linford, Buckinghamshire, a county which borders Northamptonshire.
those who advocated an empirical approach, and those who used religious or ‘temple’ medicine. Some learned physicians also saw themselves as humanists who, in resurrecting the medicine of Galen, incorporated these divisions within their texts, albeit Christianising them where necessary.\(^57\)

Chapter 1 therefore is an attempt to identify the discourse about lay medicine from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the outbreak of the English Civil War in 1642. How did people categorise each other and why did they do so? What will be argued here is that the criteria used in this period were essentially different from those used by eighteenth and nineteenth-century antiquarians and folklorists and often different from those used by historians nowadays. Though early modern discourse did involve questions of learning and epistemology, it was primarily involved with morals, social expectations, and whether people behaved in a manner that conformed with what was expected of their place in society. Medicine mirrored religion where from an early age children were taught (with the aid of emblem books) what was moral and immoral and later what was sacred and what was profane.\(^58\) Many of these portraits were known as ‘Theophrastan Characters’. They borrowed heavily from the writings of Theophrastus (4th century B.C.) which had been translated into English by Issac Casaubon in 1592 and which became fashionable in the works of John Earle, Thomas Overbury, and the Bishop of Exeter and favoured chaplain to James I Joseph Hall. These writers christianised Theophrastus’ *Characters* providing piquant observations on what was considered virtue and vice, profanity and superstition. The latter, in Hall’s words, was ‘godlesse Religion, devout impietie’ – a definition which is much at odds with that used in the Enlightenment.\(^59\) Theophrastan characters were often based on the subject’s physiognomic features and humoral constitution, a trend which was to continue throughout the seventeenth century and into the eighteenth with works such as Ned Ward’s *The Reformer: Exposing the Vices of the Age in several CHARACTERS* (1700) and


\(^58\) Jacob Cats, *Mirror of the Old and New Time*, (1632) is an example. Likewise, Thomas Fuller’s *The Holy State, and the Profane State* (1642) also used *exempla* in order to make political points.

Anthony Ashley Cooper’s *The Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, etc* (1711) the latter of which is discussed in chapter 6.

Theophrastan characters often featured medical practitioners, all of whom, regardless of their level of learning, were parodied relentlessly for the mortal and financial danger that they posed to their customers. In line with Margaret Pelling’s work they suggest that physicians, rather being among the élite in society, were trying very hard to extricate themselves from a situation in which they were mocked and feminised. Perhaps above all, Theophrastan characters, like the writings of Thomas Browne and Erasmus provided a looking glass in which readers could examine their own faults as well as those of others. While they provided a taxonomy of man they also enforced the point that individual failings were frequently human failings. This is a milder line which is at odds with the hard-line Calvinist view of the elect and the damned.

Chapter 2 looks at ways in which medical culture was shared between the different sections of society. Manuscript commonplace books were integral to early modern patterns of learning and thought both in the secular and in the religious sphere. They were used as a medium both for recording choice pieces of written information and for recording what was heard. Their contents are incredibly diverse covering the gamut of texts available to early modern readers. Frequently they contain medical and natural historical information which came either from printed material, or from neighbours, friends, and personal observations. Manuscript commonplace books demonstrate both the strengths and weaknesses of viewing popular culture as a ‘closed’ or local culture. They illustrate how a large proportion of information exchanges were local, based on idiosyncratic bonds of trust, and crossed social boundaries that appear more rigid in printed sources. On the other hand they reveal that early modern society in England was far from closed with medical information travelling both nationally and internationally by letter, word of mouth and newsprint.

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60 This is also true of early modern drama. For an example see Natsu Hattori, *Performing Cures: Practice and Interplay in Theatre and Medicine of the English Renaissance*, (Oxford D.Phil. thesis, 1995)
The methodology used in Chapter 2 is influenced by the work of Roger Chartier and in particular his notion of 'cultural usage'. This deals with material culture, in particular the production and consumption of objects, in Chartier's case printed books. Though consumption can refer to reading, it also covers a vast grey area which includes partial literacy (reading but only partially understanding or looking at illustrations), word of mouth transmission (with subsequent bastardisations), or simply owning an object for the status or comfort it brought. Added to this usage is the notion of 'appropriation' which contests what have frequently been simplistic associations between production, consumption and intellectual content, the most notable example being the rejection, on the grounds that most of the purchasers were well educated and reasonably wealthy, of Robert Mandrou's suggestion that chapbooks or *bibliothèques bleues* represented 'popular culture'. Likewise, 'appropriation' has also been used by Natalie Zemon Davis to suggest that the Shepherd's Calendar was intended for a literate and often urban audience rather than shepherds themselves. The ideas that Chartier and Davis have criticised stem largely from the application of nineteenth and twentieth-century assumptions about patterns of production and consumption to early modern problems. As Umberto Eco points out, these assumptions have often been influenced by the notion of cultural hegemony and the view that society can be divided into clearly defined producers and consumers of ideas.

Intrinsic to Chartier's work is the idea that print and reading (in all its 'grey' forms) created new patterns of cultural usage for early modern people. He notes that '...print culture redefines the exercise of power, social roles, and intellectual practices.' This can be seen most clearly in the very public role that he ascribes to print and in the effect that movable type had on reading practices. Though it is largely ignored by Chartier and others, 'cultural usage' can also be applied to manuscripts. As Harold Love has shown in relation to verse, music, and speeches, manuscript production continued to

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65 Chartier, *Forms and Meanings*, p.13. In common with Chartier's work, Chapter 2 is also heavily influenced by the work of the anthropologist Jack Goody.
fulfil important roles until well after the invention of print. Manuscripts carrying the king's speeches were a physical embodiment of royal power in the form of proclamations and utterances, and a blurring of the line that separated the written from the oral.\textsuperscript{66} Seen from another perspective, manuscripts can also be important in the dissemination of radical political or religious ideas.\textsuperscript{67}

Manuscripts were borrowed, copied and modified. In an age when printing was expensive, low volume manuscript production offered a cheaper alternative to the press, and while they are not the object of mass culture in the same way as paperbacks are in this century, they do demonstrate links between various sections of society that are missing from printed works. This is clear if we look at the manner in which they were read and used, and in this respect the methodology used in Chapter 2 applies some of the work on hermeneutics developed by Wolfgang Iser, Barbara Benedict, Andrew Bennett, and (in the context of medical history) Mary Fissell.\textsuperscript{68} While all of this work focuses on printed material, it is notable for the emphasis that it places on the interaction between the reader and the visual page, this being taken to include both the text and marginal notes and illustrations. In the case of manuscript commonplace books, marginal notes and illustrations often provided the name, location and occupation of the person who had provided information, the outcome of the cure, the date at which it had taken place, as well as later instances of success or failure. All of these helped provide an \textit{aide mémoire} for the reader as well as a guide to the probability of a cure being successful or not — an important consideration in an age when probability was judged primarily in terms of opinion.


\textsuperscript{67} See for example Margaret C. Jacob, \textit{The Newtonians and the English Revolution 1689-1720}, (Hassocks, Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1976), which deals in part with the role of manuscripts in dissemination of Giordano Bruno's radical ideas.

Commonplace books embody assumptions about the way in which knowledge should be collected, recorded and transmitted to others. These have classical precedents in the works of Aristotle, Cicero, Quintillian, and Seneca, the majority of which were revived and modified in the course of the Renaissance. Learning, according to Seneca’s metaphor, involved copying the bees, and collecting *fiorilegia* or what was best from each source whether it was written or spoken. Ann Moss and Ann Blair have traced a decline in the popularity and use of commonplace books which they link to the writings of Bacon and the paradigm he established for using personal experience rather than learned authorities in creating knowledge. This can be linked to a rejection of aphorisms and proverbs in witty conversation. Locke is likewise credited with breaking down the Aristotelian view of memory that helped structure the Renaissance commonplace book and replacing it with one based on direct sensory input.

This schema smacks of the traditional view of the seventeenth century as one of a ‘Scientific Revolution’ that changed all learning practices. As is suggested in Chapter 2, personal experience supplemented rather than supplanted the use of learned authorities. This benchmark remained in place for much of the seventeenth century as commonplace books continued to be used to record medical and natural historical material derived from a mixture of texts and observation. For all his carping about the dangers of relying on commonplaces rather than original thought and personal experience – this being a concern that had been expressed in the sixteenth century by such authors as Roger Ascham, and would be expressed again (albeit with greater impact) by Joseph Addison in the eighteenth century – Bacon made ample use of his grammar school training in the art of *topoi* and *sententia* when he compiled his *Essays, or Counsels, Civil and Moral* (1597, 1612, 1625). The titles used in this text (‘Of Fortune’, ‘Of Vain-glory’, etc), are all headings from his commonplace book. It was, he pointed out in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605), existing methods of commonplacing that he was opposed to, and not the ‘disposition and allocation of knowledge’ – a task which could be helped by ‘a good digest of commonplaces’. John Evelyn (1620-1706) clearly regarded Bacon’s work as an

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71 Bacon quoted in Mohl, *John Milton*, p.23
endorsement for the use of commonplace books as he cited *The Advancement of Learning* at the beginning of one of his own *adversaria*.

As its title suggests, Locke's *A New Method of Making Common-place Books* (1706), should likewise be regarded as at best a modification of existing practice as Locke made no reference here to the groundbreaking ideas on cognition, language, and memory, that he had expressed in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690). In fact, the initial publication of Locke's work (it came out in French as part of Jean Le Clerc's *Bibliothèque Universelle* (1686) ) contained an editorial preface in which Le Clerc made a specific link with the Renaissance interest in memory aids. Rather than using commonplace headings to provide a taxonomy for human experience, Locke tailored his work towards the reading of scripture and classical texts, suggesting an indexing system based on two letter codes which he, on the evidence of his medical commonplace books, seems to have had trouble applying. It was his name rather than a radical new method that sold pre-formatted (but otherwise empty) commonplace books for medical students until well into the nineteenth century.

Chapter 2 focuses in particular on two commonplace books from the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Wellcome MS 798 was kept primarily by the Bedfordshire physician John Symcotts and the physician W. Wells who, because his entries are contemporary with Symcotts', may have been his professional partner. Though F.N.L. Poynter and W.J. Bishop, and later Lucinda Beier have written at length about Symcotts' medical practice and have noted the diversity present in his sources of information, their studies, which are based primarily on Symcotts' manuscript correspondence and case notes, paid little attention to the commonplace book which he used to store his recipes and his notes on their therapeutic success.

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72 BL Evelyn MS 54(3) preface, n.p., 'diligence and paine in collecting Common-Places is of great use and certainty in studying'. The quotation is from Book 2, Chapter 14 of *The Advancement of Learning*.
73 I am grateful to Richard Yeo of Griffith University for this point.
75 The manuscript contains four different hands.
76 F.N.L Poynter and W.J. Bishop, 'A Seventeenth Century Doctor and his Patients: John Symcotts 1592-1662', *The Publications of the Bedfordshire Historical Record Society*, Vol. 31; Lucinda
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Wellcome MS 757 was kept by Henry Fowler (1583-c.1643), who was rector of the Gloucestershire village of Minchinhampton, and by his predecessor in the mid sixteenth century Augustine Spinney. Evidence for the wide range of different sources, both written and oral, exists in the form of marginal entries in the commonplace book and in the large number of manuscripts which Fowler's son left to Gloucester Cathedral Library or which were deposited at the British Library. Wherever possible these are used to reconstruct the social and literary backdrop to Henry Fowler's medical world.

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Chapter 3 moves away from what essentially was a private context for collecting, recording and using medical knowledge to the emergence in England during the mid 1630s of an institutional context centred around Samuel Hartlib (c.1600-62), a refugee from Elbing in Polish Prussia. The Hartlib Circle (as it has become known) was not an institution in the modern sense – that is, a group of subscribing members united for specific purposes. Rather it had a core membership consisting initially of Hartlib and the Protestant reformer John Dury (1596-1680), around which were ranged individuals from a variety of occupational, religious, and political backgrounds. Despite this diversity the activities of the Hartlib Circle should nevertheless be distinguished from the essentially private activities described in Chapter 2 (though, it is argued, private material frequently found its way into the institutional context). The Hartlib Circle was an institution in that the material Hartlib received, either in the form of letters, borrowed books and manuscripts, or in person, contributed to a wider programme of religious, technological, agricultural, and medical reform that was shared by the Circle's core members. The centrality of Hartlib to this programme was recognised by his contemporaries who described him as 'the great intelligencer of Europe' – a label which in itself attests to the growing importance of information exchange in early modern Europe.


77 Webster, p.39

Many of Hartlib's activities and interests are reflected in his Ephemerides or day-book. This is laid out in the form of a commonplace book with marginal entries, key words and dates to guide readers (which included Hartlib's scribes as well as his family and friends) to useful information. As in Chapter 2, it is suggested that form and content were related. Hartlib's Ephemerides was heavily dependent on the methods espoused by Protestant theologians and encyclopaedists (with whom he was in frequent communication via a network of European contacts), as well as the writings of Francis Bacon and the Moravian exile Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius) who was in London in the 1640s. Comenius advocated 'pansophy' or a godly project for the universal reform of knowledge and education. This would capture in writing what was commonly known as the Book of Nature, that is the threefold relationship between God, man, and nature.

Hartlib and Dury linked political reform to medical reform. In Considerations tending to the Happy Accomplishment of England's Reformation of Church and State which was written by John Dury but published in 1647 under Hartlib's name, Dury presented parliament with his plans for an 'Office of Address'. This was modelled on the French Huguenot Théophraste Renaudot's Bureau d'Adresse and was intended for 'allthings which are Usefull and profitable in a Common-Wealth for Publick and Private Accomodation, and the contention of Soul or Body'. The latter involved the reform of medicine so as to provide the poor with remedies that were reliable and either free or cheap. The need for such reform was couched in moral terms by Robert Boyle, who in an anonymous 1655 address to Hartlib complained how, out of avarice and in neglect of Christian duty, medical practitioners from quacks to physicians gullled and exploited the credulous poor.

As with all his interests Hartlib collected medical information from a wide range of people. These included alchemists, physicians, husbandmen, radicals and sectarians, fellow refugees, friends and family, as well as a huge number of empirics and artisans.


80 Anon. [Robert Boyle], 'An Epistolical Discourse of Philaretus to Empericus, Written by a Person of Singular Piety, Honour, and Learning, Inviting all True Lovers of Vertue and Mankind to a Free and Generous Communication of Secrets and Receits in Physick.', in Samuel Hartlib (ed.), Chymical, Medicinal and Chyrurgical Addresses Made to Samuel Hartlib Esq., (1655), pp. 113-50
who, if it were not for their contact with Hartlib, would otherwise remain unknown.

Historians have interpreted this apparent openness in different ways. Christopher Hill regarded it as an example of the upsurge of ideas ‘from below’ brought on by the Civil War and the relative freedom to publish (or perhaps more accurately, the inability to maintain censorship). Charles Webster in *The Great Instauration* (1975) pointed to the uptake of Baconian and Paracelsian ideas by an inner core of ‘Puritans’ as reasons for the rejection of learned pagan authorities (such as Galen) in favour of what might possibly be learned from empirics and artisans.  

The core membership of the Hartlib Circle did without doubt have radical ideas for social reconstruction. This said, care is essential when considering the manner in which these ideas were to have been applied. Webster dealt with individuals coming from a huge range of ideological positions in a manner which elided differences between those at the periphery of the Hartlib Circle and blurred the periphery of the Circle with its core. Eager to drawn connections between science and Protestant eschatology, he, like Robert K. Merton before him, used ‘Puritanism’ (which Patrick Collinson rightly identifies as simply a ‘hotter’ form of Protestantism) as a blanket term to cover both radicals and moderates, and Paracelsianism to describe the activities of those who, though disparaging of the Galenic hierarchy, were also either critical of Paracelsus or more closely allied to other writers such as J.B. Van Helmont. Likewise, he took political radicalism on the part of some iatrochemists and empirics as a sign that they were favourable to lay medical practitioners when in fact they were extremely restrictive in their approach.

While in one sense this tendency to elide, in terms of religion, the core membership of the Hartlib Circle with its periphery is a reflection of Hartlib’s own tolerance and desire

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for peace amongst Christians, in another it distorts the precise way in which Hartlib envisaged each section of society functioning. His plans were inclusive in the sense that he believed that everyone could contribute useful medical information but exclusive and hierarchical in that he gave the tasks of filtering and redistributing that information to those men who were morally sound and learned in Latin and Greek. Likewise, his reform of education in general would have enforced existing hierarchies based on learning and gender. Hartlib’s concern about the nature of medical reform had its parallels in wider debates about who should participate in political and religious life and the manner in which this participation should take place.\(^8\) Hartlib and his inner circle of associates participated in these debates by publishing and by appealing to Parliament. They advocated a state in which medicine, like politics and religion, would be placed in the hands of the godly men who they believed had access to God’s grace and special providence.

Chapter 4 examines the various ways in which English élites looked at lay medical culture in the period from the Restoration in April 1660 to the end of the seventeenth century. As is argued here, the Restoration can be seen as a watershed between élites and the rest of society. In terms of religion there was a concerted attempt on the part of the Episcopate to reassert itself after the radicalism and enthusiasm of the Civil Wars and the Interregnum. Moderation became a byword for all forms of religious and political activity. Knowledge was to be expressed in the manner of an opinion rather than as an absolute certainty, and supported, as far as possible, with reports from persons of good ‘credit’.

As historians of science have observed, these changes can also be applied to the ideas and activities of natural philosophers, in particular those who belonged to the London-based Royal Society which was established in 1660 and received it Royal Charter in 1662. Focusing on the Bishop of Rochester Thomas Sprat’s *History of the Royal Society* (1667) and taking it as the Royal Society’s ‘official’ account of its work, James Jacob has characterised Restoration science as an attempt to reaffirm the status quo. He regards the mechanical philosophy that was espoused by many members of the Royal Society as the natural ally of the Episcopate and an antidote to the dangerous mixture of divine revelation, mysticism and millenarianism advocated by, amongst others, members of...
the Hartlib Circle. Similarly, though perhaps lacking the rigid political and ideological framework found in Jacob's work, Barbara Shapiro has drawn connections between 'latitudinarianism' (or religious moderation – 'Latitude-Men' being a term used by the Bishop of Ely Simon Patrick), Restoration natural philosophy, and humanism. Finally, these connections have also been utilised by Simon Schaffer and Steven Shapin in their account of the dispute between Robert Boyle and Thomas Hobbes over the notion of a vacuum. Brimming with theological ramifications (which Schaffer and Shapin also bring out) this dispute is regarded as central to the establishment of a methodology based (on Boyle's part) around gentlemanly values regarding truth, experiments, and a plain 'matter of fact' style of reporting which was designed to avoid speculation and to minimise conflict.

Such characterisations pose problems that need to be considered if we are to gain an understanding of the manner in which élites viewed and interacted with lay medical culture. Though it is important to acknowledge the impact that the Restoration did have on people's attitudes it is also necessary to recognise just how distance was 'created' between the Restoration and the foregoing period. As historians writing around the time of the Restoration sought to advance themselves by praising Charles II and damning his enemies, so too did Thomas Sprat and the Somerset churchman Joseph Glanvill seek to promote the Royal Society by distancing its activities from those of Interregnum natural philosophers. Neither man had the complete backing of the Royal Society and both tended to overplay its position in ways that, with hindsight, show up its weaknesses rather than its strengths. As we will see in the case of the historiographer and natural

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historian Robert Plot (who did have the Royal Society's support), toadyism was rife in Restoration England and few cared if their works portrayed either the Interregnum period or 'the vulgar' more generally in a bad light.

Contrary to Jacob's argument, the Royal Society did struggle to find a footing in Restoration society. Opposition to its activities came from churchmen such as Robert South who saw the 'new science' as a threat to the Aristotelianism which had underwritten both theological and natural philosophical orthodoxy, from the existing universities of Oxford and Cambridge, conservative members of the College of Physicians, and, finally, from within the Royal Society itself. The Royal Society was, as one of its members put it, '...oppressed with domestick Envy, and proletary discouragements, ye scurrilityes of ye ignorant & idle.' Rather than detracting from its importance in Restoration society, such opposition serves to highlight the complex processes of negotiation that took place both in relation to the Royal Society's internal running and in relation to the way in which it portrayed itself at home and abroad, through its printed publications (the Philosophical Transactions and the books which received its imprimatur) and through the correspondence of its secretary Henry Oldenburg (c.1617-77).

As is argued in Chapter 4, the manner in which the Royal Society dealt with medical remedies was determined, at least in part, by issues of custodianship and the ambiguous status that such remedies had. They were the preserve of neither the layman nor of the learned physician. As can be seen from the criticism that some physicians levelled at


89 R.S.E.L. B.1. Letter 66. John Beale to Dr Chamberlain undated. Probably Edward Chamberlayne, a Fellow of the Royal Society from 1668. Writing to Evelyn in May 1666 Beale noted how certain of his gentry neighbours in Somerset 'were fallen out with God & King, & could not endure to heare well of any Royall Act, or Royall Society'. Quoted in Hunter, ETSN, p.60

Robert Boyle for including medical recipes in his *Some Considerations touching the Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy* (1663), it was not just his advocacy of chemical recipes and the experimental method that caused consternation among committed Galenists, but the fact that he was making available that which they regarded as secret, thereby impinging on their economic territory. While Boyle was aware that such territory existed and at pains avoid any criticism of his work, he was angered by the stubborn, uncharitable attitude of many physicians and felt compelled to publish. As the title of his work suggests, medical therapeutics were intrinsic to his promotion of the experimental method in natural philosophy.

Remedies were often dealt with through channels that, to modern eyes, do not appear to be connected with medicine itself and, perhaps in consequence, have been largely ignored by historians. They were part of the study of natural history, topography, antiquarianism, and agriculture. While the Royal Society possessed, albeit for a short time in the early 1660s, a Medical Committee that was designed to pool the knowledge in areas of ‘anatomy and chirurgery’ of the those fellows that were physicians, the search for medical recipes was given to the Society’s Agricultural or ‘Georgical’ Committee. Members of this Committee, which included Oldenburg, Boyle, and John Evelyn, sought to consult farmers and other lay medical practitioners, and to search books and manuscripts for any remedies or knowledge that might be put to useful purposes, either for experimentation or to advise others. Though also short-lived, its activities are important for what they can tell us about changing attitudes towards lay medicine. This is particularly so as many of its members had belonged to the Hartlib Circle and therefore brought with them at least some of the attitudes that had underwritten the activities of that group.

Focusing on John Beale (1608-83), the Somerset clergyman who had provided the impetus for the establishment of the Agricultural Committee, Chapter 4 looks at the difficulties he faced and strategies he employed as he tried to adapt, and, in some cases, forge the conditions of Restoration science and Restoration science in general. Though Michael Leslie has given some attention to this topic - he draws a contrast between

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92 Hunter, *ETNS*, p.79
Introduction

Beale's apparent openness on issues of magic and social reform in the 1640s and '50s and his retreat, in the 1660s, into an essentially private world of correspondence - it is possible to see Beale taking a more positive role, expressing in his letters (which in some cases would have been circulated) ideas that he would have liked to have seen implemented. Similarly, while Mayling Stubbs has looked at Beale's life before and after the Restoration, there are aspects of this that she either missed or that deserved greater attention than was given. Particularly important was what Beale, in a letter to Oldenburg, termed his 'rural philosophy'. In contrast to the polished 'matters of fact' sought by some members of the Royal Society, Beale was interested in rough 'experiments' - snippets of information derived from books and manuscripts, observations on local medicinal plants, simple empirical trials, or conversations with local farmers and other local medical practitioners. These, in the main, were not to be published (an outlook he shared with John Aubrey) but used to augment the work of others. He interacted with people who, in terms of their social position and their attitudes were labelled 'vulgar', but who he, as a churchman and advocate of utility (in the face of fashionable society), thought fit to meet with. His complicated use of 'vulgar' and 'vulgarity' to designate both epistemological and social characteristics needs to be explored further as it suggests both that these terms could have positive connotations and that they could be used asymmetrically to designate something that was useful but at the same time unacceptable in certain forms of discourse. It suggests too that we need to refrain from making to strong a link between fashionable opinion and scientific discourse. There are, in this context, parallels to be drawn with Beale's stance and that taken by Boyle in his work on empirical medicines.

Beginning with Beale's views on exorcism, Chapter 5 looks at the impact that discussions about religious liturgy had on attitudes towards the vulgar. As John Spurr and Tim Harris have detailed, these discussions were themselves the product of the Restoration Church's failure to establish a clear line on a problem that had dogged it

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94 Stubbs I and II
95 R.S.E.L. B.1. Letter 57 Beale to Oldenburg December 6th 1672
96 Hunter, Aubrey, p.213

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since the beginning of the seventeenth century if not before.\(^7\) That is, how to find a balance between a ‘reasonable’ but perhaps excessively plain form of Protestantism and the excesses of Catholicism, while at the same time fighting off the twin threats of ‘enthusiasm’ and ‘atheism’. Using Evelyn’s commonplace books and his posthumously published *History of Religion* (1850) we can see how this issue was approached through Scripture, comparative religion, and natural philosophy.

Importantly, it was theology and, in particular, arguments about the nature and desirability of God’s intervention in His creation that underwrote debates over the existence of witchcraft and miraculous healing. While these debates contributed to the continued presence of these subjects in both learned and popular literature, providing, for some, evidence of a more limited divergence between élite and popular culture, the situation was in fact more complicated.\(^8\) As is described here, men like Joseph Glanvill and Henry More were able to sustain a belief in witchcraft while at the same displaying great hostility towards ‘vulgar’ ‘impostures’ which were seen to devalue rather than to support their views. As Allison Coudert has argued, scepticism on the part of More and Glanvill was part of an attempt to deflect the accusation, levelled by ‘wits’ and ‘scoffers’, that they too were credulous.\(^9\)

The final part of Chapter 5 looks at how the weakness of the Episcopate and the political anxieties that this created provided a stimulus for freethinkers and deists like as John Toland, John Trenchard and Thomas Woolston to attack not only revealed Christianity but also ‘superstition’ in general. Heavily influenced by John Locke’s equation of superstition with childishness and by the interest in comparative religion that was stirred up by Pierre Bayle and Bernard Le Bouvier Fontenelle, it was these writers who emphasised a dichotomy between the religion of the élite and the superstitious excesses of the vulgar. It was their work (with its profoundly anti-clerical stance) that had a lasting impact on first, the study of ‘popular antiquities’, and then the study of popular culture in general.

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\(^8\) Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, p.690

Introduction

The impact of these changes would, however, have been much diminished and perhaps even non-existent if it had not been for their initial promulgation among wider society. Starting with the work of the Third Earl of Shaftesbury Anthony Ashley Cooper (1671-1713) Chapter 6 looks at how, through the medium of publications like The Tatler, The Spectator, and The Gentleman’s Magazine, ideas about superstition and enthusiasm and, conversely, taste, manners, and gentility spread among people of increased wealth and social aspiration in the early eighteenth century. Discovering and, at times, rejecting the customs and superstitions of ‘the people’ was, it is argued, part of a process of self-definition on the part of élites. Wherever possible, changes in mentality are also traced through oral culture, through the coffee-house and the gentleman’s club, each being an arbiter of taste and an integral part of the chatter and discussion that accompanied the reading of journals and newspapers. Lastly, the chapter returns to the commonplace book - itself a partial victim of a society interested in novelty and originality - to look at the manner in which these wider changes effected their form and content, both in terms of medicine and more generally.

Overall this thesis argues for a far more detailed approach to the relationship between lay or popular culture and élite commentary. The latter in particular needs to be seen as the product of many smaller and often antagonistic debates that were focused not on the mass of society but on élites themselves. We need to see cultural bifurcation as both an historical and a literary phenomenon - the product of, to give one example, deists and freethinkers interested in a two-tier model of religion, and the product of a real change in mentality towards medical and other associated knowledge. Particularly with the relationship between religion and lay medicine, we need to move away from the sort of linear analysis with which nineteenth and some twentieth-century commentators were so taken - secularisation leading to an attack on magical healing and other ‘superstitions’ - towards a picture that takes into account the nuances of each religious position. As we shall see below, those who believed strongly in the power of providence and supernatural healing could, for reasons quite different, be just as scathing of the ‘superstitious vulgar’ as those who regarded the belief in devils and spooks as, at best, laughable if not vulgar in itself. Finally, we should look at ‘lay medicine’ not as a monolith, but as the agglomeration of many different forms of knowledge and activity - the outcome of a multitude of different interactions and exchanges between people of differing educational and social backgrounds. The line that separated the layman from
other forms of medical practitioner was contested both in the early modern period and in the time that followed. It is to this theme that we now turn.
Chapter 1

Lay Medicine and Vulgar Medicine

Physitians all men faine themselves; Priests,
Monkes, Jewes, Barbers, Fooles,
Stage-players, Women, multitudes, that
neuer learn'd in schooles.

James Hart, frontispiece to The Arraignment of Urines (1623)

...the wisdome of God hath divided the Genius of men according to the different affaires of the world, and varied their inclination according to the variety of Actions to be performed therein, which they who consider not, rudely rushing upon professions and wayes of life, unequall to their natures; dishonour, not onely themselves and their functions, but pervert the harmony of the whole world. For, if the world went on as God hath ordained it, and were every one implied in points concordant to their Natures; Professions, Arts and Commonwealths would rise up of themselves...

Thomas Browne.

Introduction

In a recent article on 'The language of orders in early modern Europe', Peter Burke described what he saw as a 'linguistic turn' in the study of social stratification. He stressed the importance of treating 'order' as an historic concept that had been created with language and metaphor and mediated through what Emile Durkheim termed 'collective representations' either by contemporaries or, later, by historians and sociologists. According to Burke, concepts such as 'class' and 'estate' had their roots in the distinctions that Plato had made between philosophers, soldiers, and workmen, on the basis that each of these three groups corresponded to one of our three faculties – reason, anger and appetite; and in ancient Rome, by Livy’s use of the term 'ordo' to designate senators, equestrians and plebs. These ancient texts were subsequently reinterpreted by Renaissance humanists such as Machiavelli and Guicciardini, and, in early sixteenth-century England, the lawyer Edmund Dudley who divided the commonwealth into 'clergy, chivalry, and commonality'. This material has in turn been

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1 Hart's text was a translation of Petrus Forestus, De Incerto Fallaci Judicio (Leiden, 1589). On Forestus see Vivian Nutton, 'Idle Old Rrots, Cobblers and Costardmongers. Pieter van Foreest on Quackery', in Henriette A. Bosman-Jelgersma (ed.) Petrus Forestus Medicus (Amsterdam: Stichtung & Amstel, 1997), pp.245-54
assessed by historians and sociologists who have questioned whether earlier distinctions were held collectively or only by a small section of the populace who may have disagreed with each other either internally or with other groups. Finally they have questioned why the need to divide society into orders and groups was important anyway.³

Concerns such as these should be of importance to historians of medicine not least because medicine is an area where the identity of various types of practitioners and the differences that are thought to lie between them have also been constructed, both in the early modern period, and (as we have seen in the introductory chapter) by those who have written the history of medicine. An example of this can be seen in the tripartite division between physicians, surgeons, and apothecaries - a division which has, in older histories of medicine, been taken as a reflection of the reality of early modern medical practice.⁴ As Margaret Pelling has suggested, this division is connected to the efforts of a vocal but relatively small number of sixteenth and seventeenth century polemics who sought to portray physicians as artists (as opposed to craftsmen and artisans), whose knowledge had been acquired through university based book learning as opposed to apprenticeship and manual labour. Despite its many historical inaccuracies - which include the long periods of apprenticeship served by Oxford and Cambridge medical students, and the fact that many medical practitioners (including those that identified themselves as physicians) often combined physic with other craft occupations - this image of a nascent ordered and hierarchical 'medical profession' appealed to nineteenth century physicians who were similarly keen to produce boundaries for their own practice.⁵

Looking further, we can see that this attempt at demarcation was connected to those wider patterns described by Burke for the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Early historians of medicine such as W.R. Munk focused on the College of Physicians despite

² Browne, Pseudodoxia Epidemica, Vol.1, p.31
the fact that the College was largely unsuccessful in the demarcation of physic from other forms of practice.6 Like his successor in this century, Sir George Clark, Munk used the epithet 'Royal' to describe the College from its beginnings (by charter in 1518) despite the fact that the epithet was first applied after the Restoration. Both Munk and Clark accentuated the status of seventeenth century physicians, making them into prototypical nineteenth century English gentlemen in a manner that both belied the rather lowly status of physicians in the early modern period and ignored the contemporary meaning of the word 'gentleman'.7 Perhaps more importantly for this thesis, accounts such as these almost completely ignored the practice of lay medicine except where it came into conflict with an institution such as the College of Physicians.8

As we have seen in the introductory chapter, lay medicine was usually treated anecdotally and often placed within an account of cultural evolution. For example, the positivist historian Henry Thomas Buckle only liked Browne's *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, because of the way in which, as he saw it, it separated the errors of the past from a true, empirical account of the natural world. He, like W. Carew Hazlitt, ignored Browne's own emphasis on the Devil and human failings and puzzled over how the same author could have produced a work as 'superstitious' as *Religio Medici*.9 On the other side of the fence, the physician Sir William Osler believed *Religio Medici* to be "quaint and charming" and an example of the way in science and religion could be reconciled.10

This aside, neither seventeenth century attempts to construct 'popular errors' and discriminate between different types of medical practice nor their nineteenth-century

7 Pelling, 'Medical Practice', p.92
readings should be rejected by historians. In particular, the tendency to dismiss the former as mere ‘rhetoric’ and to debunk it, tends to ignore or undervalue the complexity of that rhetoric. While we should be aware that these accounts do not constitute ‘collective representations’ of either physicians or lay practitioners, we do need to identify both the vocabulary that was used and the cultural assumptions to which it appealed. We need to see how the rhetoric was put together.

This is particularly important when we consider the prospective audience for each work. As we shall see below, Galenist physicians framed their attacks on lay practitioners using a vocabulary that would have been familiar to many. They made frequent reference to ideas of rank, obedience, and social and political order, to vocation, and to the importance of mediating charity through the physician – God’s appointed healer of the body. They appealed to their patrons to intervene in medical practices that were theologically unsound or a danger to the health of the body politic. Likewise, the vulgarisation of medical knowledge, as discussed by physicians such as Thomas Browne and Richard Whitlock, was designed to appeal to what, by the late sixteenth century, was an established humanist mode of writing about the futility of human learning and the dangers of vulgarising or democratising knowledge.

On the other side of the coin, it is also necessary to recognise and account for instances where attempts by physicians to construct ‘popular errors’ or to delineate between different type of medical practice failed or were challenged by contemporaries. As David Underdown has suggested with regard to political history, such a project need not involve the strict identification of a counter-culture, as if anything this plays into the hands of polemicists who assembled their narratives by using binary black-and-white distinctions or thesis and antithesis arguments, many of which had parallels in contemporary writings on witchcraft and antecedents in classical literature. Historians

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11 David Harley, ‘Rhetoric and the Social Construction of Sickness and Healing’, Social History of Medicine, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 407-435. I am grateful to Mr Harley for allowing me to look at an unpublished copy of this paper.
should both be aware of constructions such as these and willing to look for cases in which a common language was employed by different groups.13

Already in the sixteenth century Galenic physicians met with considerable difficulties in persuading the Privy Council and powerful men such as Walsingham to take their side in the regulation of medicine against unlicensed practitioners such as Margaret Kennix. The subsequent passing of the ‘Quack’s Charter’ in 1543 only created a further incentive for polemics against quacks and mountebanks.14 Likewise, complaints by Galenists against Paracelsians and neo-Platonists can be located both specifically within the context of debates between zealous Calvinists and those more moderate Calvinists or ‘Anti-Calvinists’, and more generally as part of a largely unsuccessful attempt by Galenists to assert themselves at court – a setting which, from the mid sixteenth-century had been home to a number of notable Paracelsians.15

Just as ‘popular culture’ is largely the by-product of a binary distinction between ‘élite culture’ – the detritus that was left behind when contemporaries and later commentators finished defining their own area of interest – so too has lay medicine suffered from similar distinctions between ‘them’ and ‘us’. While historians have been relatively quick in identifying the interests involved in this process (pointing to factors such as ‘a strong professionalizing tendency’ and the separation of ‘foreigners’ from ‘orthodox’ practitioners), little attempt has been made to analyse the difficulties this delineation created.16

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14 Margaret Pelling, ‘The Education of Unlicensed Medical Practitioners’, in Vivian Nutton and Roy Porter (eds), The History of Medical Education in Britain, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), p.267. The statute stated that charitable practitioners like Kennix were ‘embued’ by God ‘with the knowledge of the nature, kind and operation of certain herbs, roots and waters, and the using and ministering of them to such as have been pained with customary diseases...’


16 Alison Klairmont Lingo, ‘Empirics and Charlatans in Early Modern France: The genesis of the Classification of the “other” in Medical Practice’, Social History, (Fall 1985), pp.583-603 especially p.596. Lingo looks at the treatment of quacks, mountebanks, and charlatans by Joubert, André de Breil, and Courval de Sonnet. She does not deal with their treatment of other types of healer. For the English context see Roy Porter, ‘The Language of Quackery in
to use the term) can be broken down into a wider range of dynamic and often conflicting
beliefs and practices, so too can lay medicine be broken down. To begin with,
distinctions existed in terms of social position, gender, whether a practitioner used
magical remedies or Galenic remedies (though frequently the two were used together and
often with no distinction), and whether or not a practitioner charged for his or her
services. Lay medicine encompassed everyone from village herb-women to charitable
lady practitioners, and well-born humanists who wrote books giving both Galenic and
magical remedies. Healing crossed social boundaries in ways which made it difficult for
early modern commentators to associate status with adherence to a particular cosmology
and it is variations such as these that led to the use of a mixture of moral,
epistemological, theological, and political complaints as means of differentiating one
practitioner from another.

Rhetoric and the construction of differences between laymen and physicians

Among humankind, different men learn or profess different arts; but everyone
should learn this one art which is vital to everyone. But alas for the extreme
perversity of human judgement! While no man will remain ignorant of the
difference between genuine and counterfeit coin, lest he be cheated in some way
in matters of gross materialism, there is no corresponding zeal to discover how
he can protect his most valuable possession. In monetary matters he does not
trust to somebody else's eyes, but in the business of life and health he is content
to follow somebody else's judgement, with his eyes shut. But if absolute
knowledge of the whole art is renewed only to a few who have dedicated a
lifetime to this single branch of study, there is no reason why anyone should be
ignorant of at least that part which pertains to good health.

Erasmus, *Oration in Praise of the Art of Medicine.*

Definition and demarcation are processes that rely on the construction of differences
between two or more individuals or groups. A 'boogy-man' laden with negative qualities
is set up only to be knocked down by an exemplary character. As Brian McGregor
suggests in a recent commentary on Erasmus' *Oration,* there are similarities between this
technique and the techniques employed by Renaissance rhetoricians. A problem is
introduced and narrated, arguments are then given and refuted before finally a *peroratio*

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England, 1660-1800', in Peter Burke and Roy Porter (eds), *The Social History of Language,*
(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp.76-77

17 *Declamatio in Laudem Artis Medicae,* translated and annotated by Brian McGregor in E. Fantham
et al. (eds), *The Collected Works of Erasmus,* Vol.7, (Toronto and London: University of Toronto
Press, 1989), p.45
or close is made. Erasmus introduced the question of what status should be accorded to the physician. He argued first that his status should be lower than that of theologians (who save men from sin) before refuting his own argument by pointing out (with the wit for which he is known) that 'without the physician, there would be no men to be saved'. Likewise, there would be no-one to rule as good magistrates were all sustained by good physicians. Erasmus then went on to give a long oration on the qualities of the learned physician and the manner in which those qualities are neglected by the common people who, because of their credulity, mistake natural healing for miracles. While the common people, like fools, have their qualities (they lack the pomp and pride of their superiors), they should not be allowed to make decisions.

Though not a physician himself, Erasmus, in common with a number of humanist physicians before him, pushed for the elevation of the art of medicine in relation to the other liberal arts—a task which was familiar to him by virtue of his contact with Thomas Linacre in early sixteenth-century Oxford.

While few seventeenth century writers ever reached the level of literary excellence in Erasmus' work, recognition of his technique is nevertheless helpful in assessing later works that promoted the position of the physician in relation to other laymen, not least because humanism and the elevation of medicine as a learned art were central to those (albeit fudged and unsuccessful) attempts by physicians to define the boundaries of their practice. Orations on the skill of learned physicians in relation to other practitioners and criticisms of erroneous texts became commonplace, either as works in their own right, or as parts of texts dealing with other medical matters, in particular texts dealing

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18 *Declamatio in Laudem Artis Medicae*, p.32  
19 *Declamatio in Laudem Artis Medicae*, p.40  
20 The differences between fools and rulers were also discussed by Erasmus in 'Whether One Ought to be Born a King or a Fool' in *The Erasmus Reader* (ed.) Erika Rummel, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 334-44. Erasmus judged that fools and kings were equal in happiness. This emphasis on the positive value of foolery, play, and laughter was gradually transformed during the course of the early modern period.  
22 Erasmus met Linacre at Oxford and London in 1511. He may also have met him in Oxford in 1499.  
23 Richard J. Durling, 'Linacre and Medical Humanism' in Francis Maddison, Margaret Pelling, and Charles Webster (eds) *Essays on the Life and Work of Thomas Linacre, c. 1460-1524*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), pp. 76-106. As Durling noted, the philological work of English medical humanists has also been overplayed.
with infectious illnesses (such as plague) where the contentious status of the disease made the need for physicians to assert themselves all the more pressing. Ironically, as we shall see below, the language of learning and the tendency to distinguish one’s own medical practice from that of others (in particular artisans and tradesmen) was quickly appropriated by those from whom humanist physicians were keen to disassociate themselves.

Early aspects of this humanist discourse can be seen in the writings of the Cambridge based physician John Caius (1510-73). Caius lacked the milder attitude towards the common people that can be found in Erasmus’ work. He, like later writers, regarded common opinion as a hindrance to the work of the physician. At the beginning of his Boke or Counseill against the Disease called the Sweate (1552) he warned his readers to ‘avoide the judgement of the multitude, from whome in matters of learnyng a man shal be forced to dissente, in disprovyng that which they most approve.’

Choosing a physician should be carried out with as much, if not more care as if one were choosing a hosier or shoemaker. Still, physicians should not be confused with craftsmen, alchemists, supposed miracle workers, and other foreign impostors. The sick should ‘fle the unlearned as a pestilence in a commune wealth’ by avoiding,

...simple women, carpenters, pewterers, brasiers, soppelallesellers ... apotecaries (otherwise for their drogges) avancers of themselves who come from Pole, Constantinople, Italie, Alamane, Spaine, Fraunce, Grece and Turkie, Inde, Egypt...from ye service of Emperours, Kings and queenes, promising helpe of al diseases, yea incurable, with one or two drinkes, by waters five monethes in continualle distillinge, by aurum potabile...sunne, moone, or starres...by blessynges...meanynge nothing els but to scorn your light believe [sic], and scorn you behind your backes.

Though Caius published this work in the vernacular, he was largely opposed to the translation and vulgarisation of learned work believing that ‘the common setting furthe and printing of every foolish thynge in englyssh, both of physicke unperfectly, and other matters undiscretely, diminishe the grace of thynges learned.’ In common with other humanist physicians, (particularly in Italy where he had received some of his education),

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24 John Caius, *A Boke or Counsell against the Disease Called the Sweate* (1552), Archibald Malloch (ed.), (New York: Scholars’ Facsimiles & Reprints, 1937), f.4v

25 Caius, *A Boke or Counsell*, f.28v. Stating a grievance such as this may have been fairly standard course for aspiring physicians in the sixteenth century. BL Sloane MS 2563 contains an unpublished text detailing ‘A just and necessarie complaint concerning Physicke’.
Caius created an image of himself that was based on proficiency and agility in Latin and Greek. In his opinion, these languages best suited the ‘adornynge of the common welthe, better service of their kyng, & great pleasure and commodite of the owne selve selves, to what kinde of life so ever they shold applie them.’ Moreover, in Caius’ estimation, humanist learning and an accurate knowledge of ancient texts made the physician a far better judge of the individual’s ailments.27

Caius’ equation of learning with state service and his emphasis on proficiency in Latin and Greek was common in a society where humanism was central to what Stephen Greenblatt has termed ‘self-fashioning’.28 Humanism encouraged scholars to study a wide range of disciplines from a common body of texts both in classical and vernacular languages, and placed the educated layman in a position that was close to that of the physician29. This on the other hand created difficulties for those physicians who did try to delineate the boundaries of their practice. Categories such as literati and illiterati (i.e. people unable to read Latin), which had been used since the middle ages (and continue to be used by some historians) to separate educated élites from the rest of society, could not be applied to those who shared knowledge with physicians or who acted as patrons to physicians.30

As Paul Slack has detailed, throughout the sixteenth century educated laymen without any formal medical education produced numerous small printed vernacular texts giving therapeutic advice. Though these were just one of many ways in which medical knowledge was diffused through society, their low cost and ready availability, at a time

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26 Caius, *A Boke or Counseill*, f.4v
when the latest continental texts were scarce in England, made them important. Authors included the lawyer and civil servant Sir Thomas Elyot, the M.P. and author of antiquarian works Humphrey Lloyd, and the Dean of Wells William Turner. Their texts offered standard Galenic and Salernitan advice on how to maintain good health. They stressed the importance of sound morals in much the same way as religious texts of this period touched on the maintenance of bodily health. Like medical humanists, these medical writers identified themselves as learned and warned their readers to keep away from unlearned craftsmen and empirics. William Clowes, a learned surgeon who was himself pursued by the College of Physicians for illegally practising physic, complained, in a manner similar to Caius, about

...tooth-drawers...horse-leeches, idiots, apple-squires...bawds, witches, conjurors, sooth-sayers and sow gelders, rat-catchers, renegades, and proctors of spittle-houses, with such other rotten and stinking weeds...in town and country,...abuse both physic and surgery.

Responses to vernacular medical texts varied. As Slack notes, for much of the sixteenth century 'there is little evidence that physicians as a whole disapproved of these works.' Physicians did however complain increasingly about what they saw as the confusion of therapeutics with the practice of physic as a whole. As we shall see below, and in the chapters that follow, it was in this area – the application of medical therapeutics – that knowledge was most commonly shared and re-interpreted by different sections of early modern society. Stalwart critics of lay medical practice such as John Cotta admitted that,

Where the causes and disease are both common and vulgar, and no circumstances requireth more than ordinarie consult, there without doubt ordinary harmlesse remedies without deeper counsell or advice, may by themselves sufficiently satisfie an usuall need.

But in general he advised that patients should consult the physician before attempting any form of domestic medicine. Though at its most extreme, self-medication was

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34 Slack, 'Mirrors of Health', p.257
35 John Cotta, *A Short Discoverie of the Unobserved Dangers of Several Sorts of Ignorant and Inconsiderate Practisers of Physick in England*, (1612), p.131
regarded by zealous Protestants as ‘self-killing’ and an insolent rejection of God’s appointed healer, in the majority of cases, physicians accepted that self treatment did take place but sought to shepherd it wherever possible. According to Browne, physicians could be distinguished from purveyors of medical therapeutics and materia medica, whether in the marketplace or in print, by their ‘true understanding [of] the nature of the disease, its causes, and proper indications for cure.’ Physicians, or so the patter went, differed from laymen in their ability to ‘see’ disease, both in terms of their skill at diagnosis and, metaphorically, in their ability to distinguish the true physician from the false physician. As Cotta put it,

...a common eye is not capable; while unperceived mischiefes stealing and insensibly enter with unprivileged remedies and by some present benefite or ease for a tune, gayming credit and entertainment, by litle and litle secretly undermine the verie frame and foundation of life.

The ‘common eye’, like the common fashion for tobacco, rarely led to good health.

Physicians engaged with notions of light and darkness, secrecy and disclosure, in their attacks on ‘books of secrets’. These small books contained a variety of household, technological, and medical advice much of which had been plundered from medieval sources such as Roger Bacon and the Pseudo-Albertus Magnus, Secreta Alberi, as well as older sources such as the Physiologus and the Pseudo-Aristotle, Secretum secretorum, by such Italian empirics as Leonardo Fioravanti and Girolamo Ruscelli (otherwise known as ‘Alessio of Piedmont’). They claimed to give ancient or hidden knowledge which was being made available as a matter of utility or as a moral duty to those who had been deprived of medical assistance by avaricious physicians. English Galenists responded

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38 Cotta, A Short Discoverie, pp.4-5

39 Eamon, Science and the Secrets of Nature, p.71; ibid., pp.142-7. A number of these Italian authors were highly educated men who had achieved fame, and in many cases notoriety, at foreign courts. Ruscelli was a Venetian humanist and aristocrat who had been educated at Padua. He received patronage from the marquis of Vasto Alfonso d’Avalos; ibid, pp.177-78. Fioravanti received a doctorate from the University of Bologna in 1568. Although in the English context such works as these were sold by empirics, they were also popularised men such as the
to this somewhat paradoxical sales pitch by comparing secret knowledge with Catholicism (which also made room for word play on the sale of ‘cathoHcons’ or alchemical nostrums), and by condemning Italian authors as ‘Imposters’. As natural philosophers would do forty years later, Galenists likened openness to truthfulness claiming that ‘the best remedies are such as have no secrets.”

Ancient sources such as Galen’s *De Sectis* and *Ars Parva* provided ammunition for physicians who were trying to create a medical hierarchy. Cotta cited *De Sectis* and the distinctions that had been made between methodists, empiricists, and dogmatists in order to support his contention that as dogmatists, university trained physicians possessed a superior *ratio* or method. In contrast to physicians who used ‘right reason’ in order to make judgements based on ‘true’ experience, empirics and the ‘simple and unlettered’ relied on ‘untried and unexperienced truths’. As the Ipswich physician Eleazar Dunk put it, ‘the best Empiricke is but a lame and left-legged Physician’.

The assault on empirical drugs and simple experience came about precisely because the status of these remedies was contested in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Royal physician George Baker in his *Newe Jewell of Health*, (1562), and used by many of those who, in public, scorned them. On Browne’s use of Fioravanti’s secrets see below.

40 James Primrose, *Popular Errors or the Errors of the People in Physick*, trans. Dr. Robert Wittie, (1651), p.44. Primrose’ work was originally published as *De Vuiji in Medicina Erroribus*, (1638)

41 Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature*, p.172, cites the twelfth-century author Nicholas of Poland who wrote *Antipocras* or ‘Against Hippocrates’. The possibility of folk secrets was rejected by a number of Nicholas’ near contemporaries. In the thirteenth century Siger of Brabant noted how, ‘In matters where the truth is deeply hidden, the common folk are not to be believed...And if you say that it is commonly believed, this is no proof, for many falsities are commonly believed.’ Cited in Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature 1150-1750*, (New York: Zone Books, 1998), p.126

42 Cotta, *A Short Discoverie*, p.35, ‘He that most seldome, nor grosly, nor easily erreth, and for the most part and commonly frameth his judgements and actions unto right reason, he is onely a right and complete artist.’

43 This system of logic was developed by Aristotle in his *Posterior Analytics*, advanced by Thomas Aquinas in the thirteenth century, and maintained by natural philosophers and theologians for much of the seventeenth century.

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Galenic orthodoxy allowed for and even encouraged the study of empirical cures by physicians.\(^{45}\) As Cotta noted,

Galen who in his understanding, sharpnesse of apprehension, and invention overshining the all the precedent wits that went before him, yea did he with humble and deigning desire search and entertain any sort of people, yea from the most unlearned Empiricke himselfe, any other particular remedies or medicines, which after by his purer and more eminextent judgement, and clearer light of understanding, refining, he reduced to more proper worth...

Though their status was sometimes regarded as ambiguous, empirical remedies had already been incorporated into the classical corpus. Contemporary empirics could only offer a 'common understanding', a vulgarisation of what was already known.\(^{46}\)

In theory, if not in practice, simple experience was not enough to cure the patient. As the Hull-based physician James Primrose (ca.1598-1659) noted,

Experience indeed is very commendable, and exceedingly convenient for all that practise physick. Nethertheless unlesse a man be learned and judicious, it is a very hard thing to acquire it.\(^{47}\)

Primrose’s argument was echoed in 1651 by the translator of his Latin text, Robert Wittie, who was one of a growing number of licensed physicians who questioned the practice of medicine by gentlewomen from aristocratic or noble backgrounds. This was a difficult task as women practitioners of high social status were generally seen as virtuous and dutiful and therefore beyond moral reproach. Their practice was generally limited to the charitable treatment of the poor or the domestic domain of 'kitchin physic' and therefore not an intrusion onto the territory of the learned physician (though physicians were also morally obliged to treat the poor at a reduced rate). Finally, women such as Lady Frances Strickland and Lady Farmer provided patronage for men like Robert Wittie and James Hart — men who, though educated, were without land or title and dependent on the fees of the wealthy. Though Hart, himself a Scot, had an uncle, Sir William Hart of Preston, who was a prominent figure under James I (his jobs...


\(^{46}\) Cotta, A Short Discoverie, pp.80-83

\(^{47}\) Primrose, Popular Errours, p.47
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included that of King’s Advocate), and a brother who was Groom of the Robes, it appears that he was unable to take advantage of any of these courtly connections.48

Hart’s approach to Lady Farmer was guarded. He noted that she was ‘a constant good house-keeper, and great reliever of the necessities of the poore’ supplying them with ‘her best cordialls, or other physicall drugges in her possession’. On the other hand, ‘she should be advised by wise and learned counsell’, a role in which Hart, like Primrose, and, before him, the French royal physician and head of the Montpellier medical school Laurent Joubert (1529-82), saw himself.49 Epistemology provided a convenient way of criticising wealthy female practitioners. Experience, however well meant, could be misleading, or, as Richard Braithwait put it (paraphrasing Hippocrates), ‘Art is long, life is short. Experience deceiving’.50 Women’s recipe books could provide useful remedies, but their claims to be ‘probatum est’ or proven, were not to be trusted.51 Like those who attacked ‘books of secrets’, Primrose denied that these remedies were secret or that women had any unique medical skills, suggesting instead that what they did know was merely a vulgarised version of the physician’s knowledge.52 Regardless of rank, women were regarded by physicians as being more susceptible to their humoral passions and lacking the reason which would allow them to study natural philosophy, an activity central to the correct practice of physic. As Wittie’s frontispiece to Primrose’s work illustrated, they required the guidance of the physician and his divinely ordained art if they were to be kept from an ‘erroneous course’.

This hierarchical and paternalistic approach was not confined to Galenists. It was, as Susan Amussen suggests, widespread in early modern society and, in the main,

48 Sir William Hart encouraged his nephew in his medical studies at Basle where he received his M.D. James Hart never received incorporated his M.D. at Oxford or Cambridge. So far no medical license for Hart has been found. I am grateful to Mr John Symons of the Wellcome Institute Library for the information with which he supplied me on this point. Hart’s KAINIKH (1633) may have been an attempt to ingratiate himself with the College of Physicians, in which case it probably failed as they only bothered to read half the text.

49 James Hart, KAINIKH, or the Diet of the Diseased, (1633), p.12

50 Richard Braithwait, The English Gentleman, (1630), p.121

51 Hart, KAINIKH, pp.8-9. Hart rejected these remedies on the basis that they did not constitute true ‘experience’. He cited Aristotle’s Metaphysics and noted that ‘the true nature of any experiment to make it such a one, is not sufficiently proved by this, that after once or twice trial what has issued some good effect.’ ‘Probatum est’ remedies are discussed in the next chapter of this thesis.

52 Primrose, Popular Errors, p.44
common to people from different political and religious backgrounds. Nicholas Culpeper (1616-52), though critical of the authority and dogmatism of Galenists and convinced that their knowledge of simples was often surpassed by that of herb-women, still believed that female practitioners required his guidance as a ‘Gent. Student in Physicke and Astrologie.’ Likewise, exponents of ‘chymical’ medicine, regarded their work as an exclusively male domain which was not to be intruded on by women, regardless of their social position. As Lynette Hunter has demonstrated, where women of high social status did practise ‘chymistry’ or engage in natural philosophical discourse it was under very particular conditions. While Charles I’s wife Henrietta Maria discussed medicine with Sir Kenelm Digby and the French Paracelsian and Royal physician Theodore Mayerne (both of whom were suspect in the eyes of many Galenists); later in the century Lady Ranelagh conferred about natural philosophical matters with the friends of her brother, Robert Boyle (1627-91). In a different context, women who had received an ecclesiastical licence to practice as midwives were usually regarded as morally sound and beyond reproach provided they limited their work to midwifery though even here texts such as Joubert’s and Primrose’s tried to address and correct ‘errors’ in their work.

Only in rare cases did Galenic physicians question the charitable motives of female practitioners and even here they were careful about just who they were attacking. Rather than criticise wealthy practitioners (he praised the duchess of Newcastle Margaret Cavendish), Oxford trained Richard Whitlock attacked those lower down the social scale, the ‘Quacking Hermaphrodites’ and ‘Petticoat Practitioners’ whose error ridden recipe books and misapplied charity ended in manslaughter for their patients. Instead of acting as ‘Brewers, Bakers, drapers &c. which are scorned as base and mechanic’, these vain women desired instead ‘to be called Mistresse Doctor, a knowing Woman, a good Body,

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54 Nicholas Culpeper, The English Physitian (1652), frontispiece; Noah Biggs, Materiaeotechnica Medicinae (1651), p.105
56 On the relatively high status of midwives see David Harley, ‘Historians as Demonologists: The Myth of the Midwife Witch’, Social History of Medicine, 3, (1990), pp. 1-26
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According to Whidock, patients liked the cachet of being treated by a gentlewoman. They behaved in a manner that was at odds with what was expected of their vocation, and (as is implied by the word ‘Hermaphrodite’) their gender. They were to be ‘stript’ (in the sense of being exposed as frauds) and ‘Whipt’. Whidock described himself as ‘out of charity’ with the ‘Almes of Physick’ and suggested that, rather than dispensing physic themselves, those whose charity was genuine should pay for learned physician to look after the poor and hospitals to house them in. While ZOOTOMIA was indicative of a hardening of attitudes towards wealthy female practitioners and a shift in Protestant notions of charity, it was also a general attack on all of those (male and female) who out of arrogance, overrated their abilities. Whitlock quoted the humanist Vives noting that, ‘wits that fly above the sphere of their Activity, fall beneath ordinary performance’.

Still further down the social ladder and away from the need for deference, the attack by physicians on female practitioners and empirics was even less restrained. Cotta distinguished empirici (in the specific sense used by Galen) from those whom he termed ‘wild sectaries’ - unlicensed medical practitioners who worked for money. His attack, like those of his near contemporaries, used a mixture of moral, Biblical, and political language. Female quacks deceived their patients in the same way as ‘Old Eve’ had deceived Adam. Their medicine was poison disguised as a ‘faire and beautiful apple’ - an analogy that addressed contemporary fears about poisoning and the association between Paracelsian medicines sold by quacks and poisons. Quacks, like Italians and Spaniards, who were also associated with assassinations, and Jews (who in the case of Dr Roderigo Lopez, were associated with poisoning), were foreign bodies, ‘more perricious to a Common-wealth, than all the common cut-throats by the high-way sides’. While Cotta described himself as a ‘counsellor’ to the ‘common and confused multitudes of ill’, Hart dedicated his work to the then Prince of Wales (later Charles I) and the ‘publique good’.

57 Richard Whitlock, ZOOTOMIA or Observations on the Present Manners of the English - Briefly Anatomizing the Living by the Dead. With an Usefull Detection of the Mountebanks of Both Sexes, (London: 1654), p.54
58 Whitlock, ZOOTOMIA, pp.55-6
60 Cotta, A Short Discoverie, p.30. For quackery and poisoning see Jonathan Gil Harris, Foreign Bodies and the Body Politic: Discourses of Social Pathology in Early Modern England, (Cambridge : Cambridge University Press, 1998), p.68. Dr Lopez, a Jewish physician, was executed in 1593 for his part in an allegedly Spanish devised plot to poison Elizabeth I.
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He compared Charles to Mithridates, the ancient king who had devised a remedy for poisons, and appealed to him to reform the practice of medicine—a custom that was common in texts such as this—John Securis having made a similar appeal to Elizabeth I in 1566.61

Cotta and Hart attacked quacks with language that was common to the Calvinist critique of theatre, costume, and cosmetics. Quacks were ‘stage players’, impostors who masqueraded as physicians deceiving their credulous audiences with their clothing (which mimicked that of the learned physician), their chatter (from the Italian ciarlatani or chatterers), and their clowning.62 Like the magi (criticism of whom could be found in both the Bible and Pliny’s Natural History), quacks were jugglers and tricksters.63 Their words (or patter from pater noster), like those of Catholic priests; their appearance, and their performances (akin to those of medieval miracle workers) were not to be trusted. For zealous Protestants such as Hart, healing words, whether spoken orally in the form of an incantation, or written down as a charm, could only work with the Devil’s assistance.64 Amulets, rings, and other healing objects were an offence to Calvinist theology which had rejected outright the healing power of relics and reduced the supernatural power of the Eucharist to a symbolic level.65 In a similar vein astrology and popular almanacs were dismissed as ‘the slander of heaven and the scandal of truth.’ While Cotta recognised that the heavens did exercise a ‘hidden power and influence’ in a very general sense, he was reluctant to base any specific medical judgement on it, believing it to be a breach of free will and an assault on the idea of God’s providence.66

62 Dunk, Copy of a Letter, p.46. For an example of English anti-theatre literature see William Prynne, Histrio-Mastix. The Players Scourge; or, Actors Tragedie, Divided into Two Parts. Wherein it is Largely Evidenced by Divers Arguments ... that Popular Stageplays ... are Sinfull, Heathenish, (1633). French rejections of theatre are discussed in lingo, ‘Empirics and Charlatans’, p.586
64 James Hart, KAINIKH, or the Diet of the Diseased, (1633), p.358; John Cotta, Cotta Contra Antonium: or, an Ant-Antony; or, an Ant-Apology, Manifesting Doctor Antony his Apologie for Aurum Potabile, in True and Equall Balance of Right Reason, to be False and Counterfaith, (1623). Cotta believed that the transmutation of metals (and hence alchemical medicine) could only work with the assistance of the Devil.
66 Cotta, A Short Discoverie, pp.94-97. Cotta based his argument on the writings of Calvin and Aristotle’s Ethics. A similar attack had been made by John Securis in 1566, though it should be noted that Securis was also the publisher of a number of almanacs.
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Characters

The irony of the attack on theatre and masquerades was that the stereotypes and characterisations relied upon by zealous Calvinist physicians to make their point, were forged in the plays of Marlowe and Webster, played-out in Elizabethan and Jacobean theatres, and popularised still further by the ‘Multitude of idle and superfluous pamphlets’ that they the Calvinist physicians disapproved of so much. Authors of such works rarely made the distinctions that Galenist physicians tried so hard to enforce. They preferred instead to laugh at the very nature of these distinctions. John Earle (1601?-65), in his series of characterisations, portrayed the physician in the following way,

He is distinguish from an Empericke by a round velvet cap, and Doctors gowne, yet no man takes degrees more superfluously, for he is a Doctor how soever. He is swarne to Galen and Hypocrates, as University men to their statutes, though they never saw them, and his discourse is all Aphorismes, though his reading be only Alexis of piedmont, or the Regiment of Health.

Characterisations such as this were not unique to cheap print. They were a common feature of the sixteenth and early seventeenth-century fascination with human types and human failings. The roots of this are tangled and widespread. They can be found in medieval writings on virtue and vice and in renderings of the seven deadly sins. They are a feature of the Renaissance revival of Greek physiognomic texts such as Theophrastus’ Characters in which superstitious people are characterised by their raving and by their frequent visits to soothsayers and diviners — a stock theme in Galenist attacks on popular medicine, and one which would also be present in eighteenth-century descriptions of

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67 James Hart, KAINIKH, p.1
68 John Earle, Micro-Cosmographie or, A Piece of the World Discovered, (London: Methuen, 1904 reprinted from the 1633 edition), Sig. C.
'enthusiasm'. Finally, they are part of the popularisation of Roman satire and rhetoric.

The function of these works was pedagogic. By juxtaposing different character types - the virtuous with the profane, the superstitious with the devout, constancy with indifference - texts such as Nicholas Breton's *The Good and the Badde, or, Descriptions of the Worthies, and Unworthies of this Age. Where the best may see their graces and the worst discern their baseness* (1616) provided terse moral lessons in a manner that was common to sermons and moralising broadsheets. Laid out as emblem books or commonplace books they also served to teach children the art of rhetoric by supplying ready portraits of different character types (which were often compared to animals) as well as metaphors, similes, or apt phrases.

Character books were part of the literature of estates. They provided a taxonomy of man in which the shortcomings of each type was highlighted. This said, certain faults were common to all. Works such as Bishop Joseph Hall's *Virgidemiarum* (1597-8), and later, Richard Flecknoe's *Collection of the choicest Epigrams and Characters* (1673) criticised physicians for their avarice while the courtier Sir Thomas Overbury laughed at the presumption of the almanac maker noting that 'any old shepheard shall make a dunce out of him'. Superstition and profanity were traps into which the most learned could fall. As Hall noted in his portrait of the profane man, 'Appetite is his Lord, and Reason is his servant, and Religion is his drudge. Sense is the rule of his beleefe; and if Pietie may be an advantage bee can at once counterfeit and deride it.' Early modern England was a hierarchical society in which those at the top were expected to set an example to those beneath them. Profanity, superstition, and vulgarity were all the worse if they came from 'Statistes and Politicians'. As Thomas Browne noted in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*,

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70 Smeed, pp.11-12. The works of Horace and Martial were popularised in Henry Hutton, *Follie's Anatomie: or, Satyres and Satyrical Epigrams. With a Compendious History of Ixion's Wheel*, (1619)

71 Smeed, p.9

...whosoever shall resign their reasons, either from the root of deceit in themselves, or inability to resist such trivial deceptions from others, although their condition and fortunes may place them many Spheres above the multitude, yet they are still within the line of vulgaritie, and Democraticall enemies of truth. 73

Browne had expressed this view ten years earlier in *Religio Medici* (1635). There was he noted,

...a rabble amongst the Gentry, a sort of Plebeian heads whose fancy moves with the same wheel as these; men in the same Level with Mechanicks, though their fortunes do somewhat guild their infirmities, and their purses compound their follies.

Writing in a manner typical of contemporary attacks on worldly goods and vanity, Browne attacked the 'corruption' of his times, and looked to a 'Nobility without Heraldry, a natural dignity, whereby one man is ranked with another, another filed before him, according to the quality of his Desert [i.e. his merit], and the pre-eminence of his good parts.' 74 This may have been wishful thinking, but Browne, though in no way friendly to the 'vulgar' as a group at the bottom of the social ladder, recognised that vulgaritie encompassed others who, as result of birth and monetary wealth, were raised above the common people. In this sense, some of Browne's opinions would be mirrored in the early autobiographical works of Robert Boyle and it is not without coincidence that Boyle probably read the *Religio Medici* sometime before he began writing in the late 1640s. Boyle reacted negatively to what he saw as the vanity and wastefulness of his brother Francis considering it as an offence to Christian ethics and a breach of the gentlemanly code. As Boyle's later medical writings would show, both he and Browne were aware that authority and position brought with them an obligation not to deceive people with errors and that this obligation had not always been fulfilled in the past. 75

Plague and specific remedies

The attack by physicians on empirics had epistemological as well as social dimensions. The value of empirical remedies was contested in instances where neither the cause of a disease nor the cure for it could not be satisfactorily explained within the humoral or

73 Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Vol.1, p.21
74 Browne, *The Religio Medici and Other Writings*, p.66.
qualitative frame. Both the disease and the cure were deemed to have hidden or 'occult' qualities. Diseases of the 'total substance' (as they were also known) included epilepsy and poisoning, as well as epidemics such as plague (itself a kind of poisoning of the air). Cures or 'specifics' included amulets made from materials such as vervain, unicorn's horn, and dried toad. Though the notion of occult qualities and diseases of the total substance had been known since antiquity, they gained particular currency in the early modern period with the growth of neo-Platonism and Paracelsianism (which used astral influences and the doctrine of sympathies to explain plague and the action of amulets). Remedies were sold and ideas popularised through cheap texts, a number of which gave advice on how to make and use amulets. Also important was the growing publicity that cheap print brought to plague itself. Plague was a disease where both sufferers and those who hoped to preserve them did not make strict distinctions between orthodox Galenic remedies and specifics such as amulets and toadstones. It is not without coincidence then that two of the strongest warnings against unlicensed practitioners and illicit remedies — Caius' Boke or Counseill against the Disease Called the Smate and Francis Herring's To the wearers of împoisoned Amulets as Preservatives from the Plague (1604) — also dealt with diseases of the total substance.

In the academic context, the notion of total substance was central to a long and bitter debate between the followers of the French physician Jean Fernel (1497?-1558) and Galenists at the Universities of Paris and Montpellier over the existence of occult remedies and their acceptability, both in terms of natural philosophy and theology (in particular, the question of whether God used inferior agents in sending an aerial disease such as plague). Fernel was essentially a Renaissance Platonist arguing against Aristotelians. As Laurence Brockliss has detailed, by the first half of the seventeenth century the debate had mutated in such a way that followers of Fernel (by virtue of their belief in the role of inferior agents in the transmission of plague) became associated by their critics with the supernatural and the demonic. In the context of religious and political strife (most notably the rise of Jansenism in the 1650s and the ongoing conflict

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between Huguenots and Catholics), this medical dispute was highly politicised with supporters of Fernel's position and their opponents both trying to find favour at court or from powerful players such as Richelieu. 

Though this was largely a French debate, it did have repercussions for the English setting. These can be seen in the writings of James Primrose who trained at Montpellier graduating in 1617. In his graduate thesis he dismissed belief in the efficacy of amulets as a superstition claiming instead that they had only a psychosomatic value. Primrose repeated his arguments in *De Vulgi in medicina erroribus* (1638), a text which was translated into English in 1651. He rejected the theory of a 'world soul', which was intrinsic to neo-Platonic discussions of specific cures, as erroneous. He attacked Paracelsus and his followers Oswald Croll and Johann Hartmann, for their 'gross ignorance of natural philosophy'. In common with the opponents of Fernel's position, Primrose had problems squaring his Aristotelian natural philosophy with neo-Platonism. Elsewhere, he assailed Paracelsians for their vanity in believing that they had access to magical remedies, only to reverse his position by describing Paracelsus as a 'magician' who had tried to overthrow 'Galen's method of physick' by teaching that 'diseases ought to be cured by any art whatsoever, whether by the help of Devils, or of natural means.'

Protestant invective was a double edged sword that could work either by devaluing the claims of neo-Platonists and Paracelsians by reducing them to folly or vanity, or by upping the stakes and suggesting that practitioners really were in league with the devil. Both strategies were designed to appeal to an audience who had been taught both to question the likelihood of miracles and magic in the post-Apostolic age and to associate claims for them with the strong possibility of demonic intervention. As Robert Burton put it, 'the Divell is an expert physician' who is ever ready to delude the credulous and the impious – a category which included magicians as well as their patients.


77 Brockliss, 'Seeing and Believing', p.81.

78 Brockliss, 'Seeing and Believing', p.294, fn.90

79 Primrose, *Popular Errors*, p.402

80 Primrose, *Popular Errors*, p.35

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Hart took this line in his 1633 text *KAINIKH, or the Diet of the Diseased* where he compared Paracelsus to Simon Magus, the biblical character who had deluded the Samaritans with counterfeit miracles. He cited St. Paul and warned his readers to 'abstain from all appearances of evil'. False miracles were (in the eyes of Protestants) commonly allied with Catholicism (and in particular Jesuitism), making it even easier for Galenists to attack the writings of Italian neo-Platonists such as Ficino, Campanella, and Kircher. Catholicism and its blood iconography were associated with sympathetic cures such as the 'weapon-salve', and 'tricks' such as the 'Lamp of Life' which relied on ingredients that had been collected in a 'superstitious manner'. According to Hart, the Lamp of Life burned because it contained blood mixed with the spirit of wine (alcohol) and because the Devil altered the radical moisture present in the blood so as to delude 'the simpler sort'.

Like Hart’s treatment of sympathetic magic, Cotta’s discussion of witchcraft suggests that physicians were able to combine scepticism for vulgar testimony with medical theory and a firm adherence to supernatural causation. That said, scepticism had its place and its boundaries. If taken to excess, it could be as dangerous as credulity. As Cotta noted,

> To ascribe naturall effects to supernaturall causes, is grosse ignorance, so to enquire naturall causes in supernaturall effects, is profane curiosity. In both these extremes men too commonly erre, the learned for the most part in the latter, the unlearned in the first, the one too wise, the other stark foole.

Though both Cotta and Hart would have rejected Thomas Browne’s own neo-Platonic emphasis on ‘the secret Sympathies of things’, they would have endorsed his view that ‘it is the work of the Devil to persuade man that God’s miracles are simply natural effects’. Browne believed that there were witches and that those who doubted this,

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82 Hart, *KAINIKH*, p.381
83 The charge of demonism was of course also levelled by Catholics at neo-Platonists such as Ficino.
84 Hart, *KAINIKH*, pp.363-66. A favoured subject for Paracelsian authors, the Lamp of Life was reputed to work by sympathy, indicating a man’s vitality by the strength of a flame produced when the spirit of his blood was burned in a glass.
85 Cotta, *A Short Discoverie*, p.55
86 Browne, *The Religio Medici and Other Writings*, p.23. Cotta dealt with the subject of witchcraft at greater length in *The Triall of Witch-craft*, (1616).
and the world of spirits in general, were atheists. This said, for Browne, a belief in the
existence of witches was not paralleled by a belief that all magic was witchcraft.87

Vulgar testimony

Scepticism about the value of vulgar testimony was common to early modern thinking.
According to Browne, 'the people' were 'the most deceptable part of Mankind'. They
were dominated by the 'irrational and brutal part of the soul', prey to 'sensible
delusions', the 'dominion of the appetite' and the 'grossenesse' of their bodily
constitution. Browne located his arguments within a framework of medical ideas and
biblical and classical examples that would have been familiar to his educated readers.
Melancholy and 'enthusiasm' — the latter being a category which, as we shall see in
following chapters, was used throughout the early modern period to describe vulgar
behaviour — though common to everyone, was particularly applicable to those at the
bottom of the social scale.

Individual weaknesses and errors were compounded as people grouped together to form
a 'confusion of knaves and fools'. It was the vulgar who had mutinied against Moses'
authority and erected the Golden Calf and, worst of all in Browne's opinion, it was the
vulgar who, having brought Christ into Jerusalem in triumph, mocked him and
demanded his crucifixion.88 The people were fickle and inconsistent (a common
 trope in
biblical and classical history). As Browne put it,

Certainly hee that considereth these things in Gods peculiar people, will easily
discerne how little of truth, there is in the wayes of the Multitude; and though

87 Thanks in part to Francis Hutchinson's mention of the case in his, An Historical Essay Concerning Witchcraft, (1718), pp.118-20, Browne is infamous for having given his medical opinion in the trial for witchcraft of Amy Duny and Rose Cullender in 1664, a trial which ended in the two women being hanged. As J.F.S. Post comments, (Thomas Browne, p.17) Hutchinson exaggerated Browne's importance in the trial. He was only one of twelve witnesses called and his evidence was not pivotal. This said, medical evidence could be as strong a force for a guilty verdict as it was for an innocent one; James Sharpe, Instruments of Darkness. Witchcraft in England 1550-1750, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1996), pp.225-27. As Sharpe notes, where scepticism did occur it was on the part of judges.

88 Browne, Pseudodoxia Epidemica, Vol.1, p.18; On this point much of Browne's text was derived from Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion, Bk.1, Ch.5, Section 2 and a sermon by Lancelot Andrewes in his Sermons, 4th edition (1641), pp.278-9.
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sometimes they are flattered with that Aphorisme, will hardly believe the voyce of the people to bee the voice of God.\(^9\)

Weight of opinion was no guarantee of veracity, for as he pointed out, 'the greater part of Mankind having but one eye of Sense and Reason, conceive the Earth far bigger than the Sun.'\(^90\)

\(N o s \ nume r u s \ sum u s,\) is the Motto of the Multitude, and for that reason are they fooles. For things as they recede from unity, the more they approach to imperfection, and deformity; for they hold their perfection in their simplicities, and as they nearest approach unto God.\(^91\)

Browne's statement (which echoes his attachment to Platonic philosophy) was a rejection of democratic government.\(^92\) The rule of the people, as evidenced by David Joris' Anabaptist rising at Leiden in 1525, would always descend into chaos and disorder.\(^93\) While Browne, as possible result of his attachment to Richard Hooker (1553-1600) and Hugo Grotius (1583-1645), placed great emphasis on religious toleration, he was adamant in his rejection of sectarianism and heresy.\(^94\)

Even where they did not share his other opinions, many of Browne's contemporaries followed him in his rejection of popular government. Thomas Hobbes (himselt the learned enthusiast and bogey-man of Restoration historians) was sufficiently worried by religious and political disputes (in particular the Petition of Right) in the late 1620s that he published, in 1629, a translation of Thucydides' account of the Peloponnesian War in which he warned that assemblies were "most dangerous and desperate enterprises"; and his \textit{Leviathan} (1651) was perhaps the most potent warning of the perils inherent in allowing the natural equality of man to become the end point of human government.\(^95\) Likewise, Robert Filmer, though differing from Hobbes in his views of nature,

\(^9\) Browne, \textit{Pseudodoxia Epidemica}, Vol.1, p.18; \textit{ibid.}, Vol.2, p.656. The saying \textit{Vox populi, vox Dei} was first rejected in writing by Alcuin of York c.800.
\(^90\) Browne, \textit{Pseudodoxia Epidemica}, Vol.1, p.15
\(^92\) According to Plato, perfect government (like perfect forms) could not be realised.
\(^93\) Browne, \textit{Pseudodoxia Epidemica}, Vol.1, p.19
\(^94\) On Browne's religious attachments see Cunningham, 'Sir Thomas Browne and his \textit{Religio Medici}', pp.26-27
\(^95\) Thomas Hobbes, \textit{Eight Bookes of the Peloponnesian warre ... Interpreted with Faith and Diligence Immediately out of the Greeke by Thomas Hobbes.} (1629). Cited in Underdown, \textit{A Freeborn People}, p.43
\(^96\) \textit{Leviathan}, part 1, chapter 13 'Of the NATURALL CONDITION of Mankind, as concerning their Felicity, and Misery'.

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monarchy, and liberty, warned in *Patriarcha* (a text which though written in the late 1630s, was only published in 1680), of the dangers of popular government. As Mark Kishlansky has described recently, fables, which, along with proverbs, Browne saw as culprits in the dissemination of learned errors and faulty morals, increasingly, in the course of the seventeenth century, became a vehicle for attacks on the political capacities of the common people. Kishlansky focuses on Aesop’s fable of the frogs in which the frogs ask Jupiter for a king only to be dissatisfied with what they are offered (first an inanimate ‘King Log’ and then a stork who devours the foolish among them). While in earlier editions of the fable (the majority of which were based on William Caxton’s late fifteenth century translation) the frogs’ initial freedom is contrasted with their dissatisfaction at inadequate kingship, in editions from the 1630s and later, the frogs are portrayed as being at a loss without a king and an unsettling influence once given one. This said, in all instances, it is good kingship that is demanded, and not self-government — a reflection perhaps of what Underdown sees as a common appeal by elite and popular culture to social stability in the period before 1640.

Though texts such as these can be located within what many historians regard as the deteriorating religious and political climate of the 1620s and 1630s; within the context of debates over the organisation of the church, the position of courtiers, or what levels of wealth and education were appropriate to any status or occupation; there is a sense in which ‘the vulgar’ never held a favoured position. Their status as fickle, inconstant, even dangerous, was fixed in a corpus of classical literature that was known to a wide range of readers. It gained greater prominence as and when it was required. James Hart could appeal to Horace’s saying that the vulgar ‘scarce know chalke from cheese’ in the

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97 Underdown, *A Freeborn People*, p.44

98 Mark A. Kishlansky, ‘Turning Frogs into Princes: Aesop’s Fables and the Political Culture of Early Modern England’, in Mark A. Kishlansky and Susan D. Amussen (eds), *Political Culture and Cultural Politics in Early Modern England*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), pp.301-38; Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Vol.1, p.16. ‘Thus unto them a piece of Rhetorick is a sufficient argument of Logic, an Apologue [i.e. a fable] of Aesope, beyond a Syllogisme in Barbara, parables then propositions, and proverbs more powerfull, then demonstration.’; *ibid.*, p.54. Again, Browne noted that morals should not be learned from fables.

99 Kishlansky, ‘Turning Frogs into Princes’, p.351. Caxton’s edition was published in 1484. Pro-Royalist editions of Aesop’s fables were produced after the Restoration. The most notable examples were by Sir Roger L’Estrange in 1692 and Aphra Behn in 1687.

100 Underdown, *A Freeborn People*, p.45
knowledge that it would (at least in this proverbial form) be recognised by his readers.\textsuperscript{101}

This said, if it was accepted that the common people were boorish and foolish (and an unlikely audience for Galenist invective), then the onus was on physicians themselves to establish their position. For while they appealed to a language of natural order and vocation in order to justify their claims, it was clear that they themselves did not possess an established place in that order. As Harold Cook notes,

\begin{quote}
Socially, intellectually, and economically...the physicians of seventeenth century England resembled their learned counterparts in church and university more than the gentry of the land, law, or commerce. While the physicians could sometimes achieve social and economic success more readily than other practitioners by virtue of their university degrees, they were neither guaranteed such success nor so elevated socially above other practitioners as to be exempt from their competition.\textsuperscript{102}
\end{quote}

Even within this frame of reference, physicians lacked the (albeit limited) financial support given to the clergy. They had to share the right to license practitioners with the ecclesiastical authorities and the universities, and, as we shall in Chapter 2, they shared at least part of their practice with clergymen themselves.

\section*{Vocation and vulgarisation}

Both Hart and Cotta vacillated between attacking the common people for their credulity and attacking those who deceived them. As David Harley has suggested, both authors directed the mainstay of their invective against parsons and vicars who practised medicine and in particular those who engaged with what they regarded as illicit remedies and techniques such as judicial astrology. Hart criticised priest physicians in his two published works and in a manuscript which he himself suppressed. While the former complained in general terms about ministers and clergymen who practised medicine the latter was far more aggressive.\textsuperscript{103} He framed his argument in terms of lawfulness, citing

\begin{itemize}
\item Hart, \textit{The Arraignment of Urines}, (1623), p.47; Horace, \textit{Epistles}, I, vii, 24. Horace had in fact said that it was the wise, and not the vulgar, who knew the difference between coins and counters. John Palsgrave's \textit{Le</entry>

\begin{itemize}
\end{itemize}
Chapter 1

scripture, canon law, and the writings of William Perkins in defence of his claim that a man could not be both an evangelist and a physician. Parsons and vicars were intruders into the ‘profession’ of physic, by which he meant those who openly declared or ‘professed’ themselves to be physicians. As Harley notes, Hart, like Cotta before him, was appealing to growing concerns, among both Northamptonshire Calvinists and Jacobean Calvinists in general, over the abandonment, by a section of the learned clergy, of preaching and counselling in favour of good works, a category which included medicine. Provided the laity did not attempt to practise medicine themselves Hart was willing to place the weight of blame on clergymen as ‘ringleaders and cheife maintainers of such disorder’.

As in other aspects of early modern social discourse, clergymen were expected to set an example for their congregations. Their role was both to scold and to guide. As Eamon Duffy has remarked, it is the tendency of some historians to focus on the first of these tasks that has led to a ‘two culture polarity’ which ignores the direction of godly invective. Sermons on the “incorrigible profanity of the multitude” were, more often than not, addressed to those who already regarded themselves as godly in order to fortify them in their evangelical role. They were part of what Duffy terms the ‘perennial rhetoric of reform’ in which the emphasis was as much on the reformer as his congregation.

Just as clergymen had a duty to care for their congregations, so, too, physicians (by their own accounts) had an obligation to provide accurate medical advice; and physicians, like clergymen, subscribed to a paternalistic, ‘top-down’ view of knowledge in which errors are the product of proud learned men. While this view can be found among Calvinist writers such as Primrose who noted that ‘there are very few Errours

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105 Harley, 'James Hart', p.364. As Harley notes the division between Calvinists and 'anti-Calvinists' was not clear-cut. Many godly Protestants advocated the practice of medicine by clergymen.

Not surprisingly, given his emphasis on continuities between late medieval Catholicism and
abroad among the people, to which heretofore some Physitian or other hath not given a being, by reason of some Theoremes and rules of Physick, by them ill understood', it is far stronger in the works of Joubert (who along with those of the Italian physician Scipio Mercurio, formed a model for Primrose); and it is a key feature of the writings of Browne.  

While Joubert in his Erreurs Populaires (1570) was keen to remove proverbial errors from medicine, he was also able to see how these errors had come about through misinterpretations or vulgarisations of classical texts. For example, in his commentary on the popular custom of giving sausages made from hare's blood as a sign of affection (a custom he condemned on account of the tendency of blood to putrefy), he noted the custom may be attributed to Plato's placement of the seat of love and the production of blood in the same organ, the liver. Although he resented ignorant midwives, Joubert dealt with their errors with humour that was commensurate with a man who, at Montpellier and in his Traité du Ris (1579), extolled the therapeutic power of laughter. As Mikhail Bahktin pointed out, Joubert, like his contemporary François Rabelais, was able to harness grotesque and sexually explicit language for didactic purposes. In answer to the question 'Whether it is true that an old man cannot beget sons' he expostulated,

Stop to think! Does not one see old men who are quiet fiery and rigid, with little or no catarrh or phlegm, handsome and with good colour? Why should it be that they not have a shot of hot and dry sperm to beget a son? Add to this, if you will (as I said of women) that he uses warming remedies common to old men: spices, un-watered wine, and so on. I think it could happen on occasion that, with his wife well disposed for it, he will have the sperm needed for a male.

Reformation Christianity, Duffy sees the writings of early Catholic reformers as forerunners to this rhetoric.

99 Primrose, Popular Errors, p.186; ibid, p.397. Primrose noted that 'not only the common people, but also very many Physicians' recommended applying whelps and pigeons to the soles of the feet as a therapy for colds.


102 Joubert, Popular Errors, p.117
Elsewhere, Joubert had Democritus laughing over human folly and stupidity in much the same way as Burton would fifty years later in his *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621). While there was ‘nothing more foul and unjust than an ignorant and untrained man’, error also lay in human pride and overconfidence which he regarded as the common downfall of both physicians and empirics. For Joubert, as for Galen, medicine was an art based on conjecture. It lay at the midpoint between total ignorance and total knowledge – the former, in every likelihood, the result of a search for the latter. Joubert’s work was something of a paradox, akin to the learned scepticism and ‘learned-ignorance’ in Rabelais, Montaigne, and Burton.

Similar patterns are visible in Browne’s writings. Both his *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* (1646) and his earlier *Religio Medici* (a work which, contrary to Buckle’s assertion, is inseparable from the *Pseudodoxia*), are centred around the Fall of Man. An illustration of the Fall is on the frontispiece of *Religio Medici* and it is the topic of the first chapter of *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. Though man was tempted and deceived by Satan, it was human curiosity and, above all, free will that brought about the Fall. The Fall, and the infinite gap that lies between man’s worthiness and the glory of God, taints any further search for knowledge. As Browne notes, ‘We do but learn today what our better advanced judgements will unteach to morow.’ This said, man, whose greatest sin was pride, should pursue knowledge not for himself, but to the glory of God, for ‘wisdom is His most beauteous Attribute; no man can attain unto it, yet, Solomon pleased GOD when he desired it.’ True knowledge of God, like that of the human soul, would always be denied to man; instead, its mystery formed the basis for faith. Browne recognised the limits that the Fall had placed on man’s reason but, in common with Boyle a generation

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113 Joubert, *Popular Errors*, p.52  
114 Joubert, *Popular Errors*, p.56. The quotation was from Terence’s *Adelphoe*, 1.98: “homine imperito numquam quicquam iniustiust”; *ibid*, p.87  
115 Joubert, *Popular Errors*, p.46; Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), p.224. Davis points to the paradox inherent in Joubert’s work. On one hand it was intended to demystify medicine, on the other it was designed to keep medicine firmly within the hands of the university trained physician.  
116 Cunningham, ‘Sir Thomas Browne and his *Religio Medici*’, pp.21-22  
117 Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, p.7, ‘to speak strictly, the sin of the fruit was not the first offence, the first transgressed the rule of their own reason, and after the commandment of God.’  
118 Browne, *Religio Medici*, p.78  
119 Browne, *Religio Medici*, p.14
later, he saw this as the starting point, and not the terminus of an examination of the 'art of God'. This was Browne's Christian fideism.

Browne's beliefs can be interpreted within a philosophical framework provided by Christian Platonism and the theology of Richard Hooker. While the former emphasised how forms (and in sixteenth and seventeenth century readings, it was the soul that gave man his form) could not be realised; the latter focused on the damage that had been done to man's natural reason at the Fall, all the time seeking comfort in the special assistance that was available through God. Ideas such as these, along with a revival in the Stoicism, provided a cultural backdrop for a wide range of writers and poets. Browne's work also echoes that of John Davies, Richard Greville, and John Donne, all of whom, as learned men, confessed their own ignorance – a paradox in an age where, as Rosalie Colie suggested, learning rested on paradoxes.

In *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* Browne set out to examine the process by which knowledge was vulgarised and then to attempt to correct these vulgarisations with what he called 'three determinators of truth, Authority, Sense, and Reason' – categories which were taken from Francis Bacon's posthumously published *Sylva Sylvarum* (1627). Errors stemmed from learned authors and were disseminated by those who, in their veneration for 'Authoriy' and 'times past', treated their sources as infallible, pluming 'themselves with others Feathers' and turning things 'knowne and vulgar' into 'reputed elegancies'. Though Galen and Hippocrates were in the main venerated (as was to be expected from a learned physician) because they had 'conceived it no injustice, either to examine or refute the doctrines of his predecessors' others were judged more harshly. Thucydides was attacked for sprinkling his work with 'fabulosities', and Kiranides was criticised for popularising the 'Naturall and Magicall properties of things' found in 'Sundry Arabick

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writers' without understanding their 'beliefs'. Of all the ancient texts Pliny's *Natural History* was identified as the most prominent source of errors. As Browne remarked,

Now what is very strange, there is scarce a popular error passant in our days, which is not either directly expressed, or diductively contained in this worke, which being in the hands of most men, hath proved a powerful occasion of their propagation.

Pliny's 'curiositie' was nothing compared to the 'credulity' of those who read and passed on his mistakes, and to this end Browne reserved the bulk of his comments for authors of books of secrets such as Alessio of Piedmont and Giambattista della Porta (1535?-1616), and encyclopaedists such as Ulisse Aldrovandi (1522-1605) and Conrad Gesner (1516-65), and their readers. Like Joubert, he delivered his criticism with barely concealed laughter. 'What foole', he asked, 'would beeleeve, at least, what wise man would rely upon that Antidote delivered by Pierus in his Hieroglyphicks against the sting of a Scorpion? that is to sit upon his Asse with ones face towards his taile; for so paine leaveth the man and passeth into the beast.' Uncensored medical recipes were there to be ridiculed as were the 'swarmes of others ...men [have] delivered in their writings, whose verities are onely supported by their Authorities: but being neither consonant unto reason, not correspondent unto experiment.'

Errors from printed books were recycled over and over again as,

Authors presumably writing by common places where in for many years promiscuously amassing all that makes for their subject, they break forth at last in trite and fruitlesse Rhapsodies thereby doing not onely open injury unto learning, but committing a secret treachery upon truth. For their relations falling upon credulous Readers, they meet with prepared beliefs, whose supinities had rather assent unto all, then adventure the triall of any.

*Pseudodoxia Epidemica* is a text loaded with paradoxes, anomalies, and contradictions, some of which are intentional, others less so. By the time Browne was writing, many of his complaints were themselves, commonplace. Sixteenth-century physicians such Girolamo Mercuriale, a professor at the University of Padua (where Browne has studied in the early 1630s) had, with few results, warned their students against the immoderate

Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Vol.1, pp.32-38; *ibid.*, p.46, 'There is scarce any tradition or popular error but stands also delivered by some good Author.'; *ibid.*, p.32

Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Vol.1, p.52


Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Vol.1, p.44
use of *compendia*, that is collections gleaned from other authors. Neither was the attack on Pliny new or particularly successful. It was just one aspect of a somewhat chauvinist effort by humanist physicians such as Niccolo Leoniceno, to assert the superiority of Greek medical texts over Roman ones in an attempt to establish themselves as Galen's true heirs. This was a process that had been taking place since the late fifteenth century. Browne's attack over a century and a half later on the persistence of Pliny's errors is a fair guide to the failure of Leoniceno's invective.

Vulgarisations of Pliny's *Natural History*, both in the Latin and in the vernacular, were printed throughout the early modern period and many more circulated as manuscripts.

Also indicative of the failure of earlier attempts at reform were Browne's criticisms of those who relied too heavily on 'Authority' and commonplaces — criticisms that had been made by Bacon in *The Advancement of Learning* (1605) forty years earlier. *Pseudodoxia Epidemica* is a work of synthesis that relies heavily on the use of one authority to refute another. For example, in his attempt to refute the error that elephants have no joints Browne presented a list of offending ancient authors and encyclopaedists. Having begun his list with Aristotle and complained that it is difficult of conceive of a creature without joints walking, Browne then returns to Aristotle as a source of authority on animal locomotion — 'as Aristotle teacheth'. In short, his account, like those of his near contemporary Edward Topsell, rests heavily on examples taken from classical mythology and not from experience. A similar trend is clear in Browne's discussion of the medical qualities of the unicorn's horn and the bezoar stone, which as we have seen, were used as specifics. Browne was in no doubt about the existence of both drugs and based his description of them on the accounts given by Pliny and Solinus. He believed both to have 'Antidotall qualities' against poisons but rejected the suggestion, made by 'Modernes', that they would protect people from poisons that worked by 'corrosion of

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130 On this point see Nutton, 'Hellenism postponed', pp.169-70
134 A concretion found in the stomachs of goats and other ruminants.
For all his criticism of commonplace books, it is clear that Browne used them to write his books, as his manuscripts include the notes on witchcraft that would be published in *Religio Medici* as well as snippets from classical authors which he went on to discuss in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*. This said, Browne's commonplace books were not just a test bed for ideas that would later be rejected. They also contained medical recipes which Browne appears to have tried. On one page he noted the following,

"Since you are so much unsatisfied with the many rational medicines which you say you have tried for gout, you have leisure enough to make trial of these empiricall medicines."

The recipes included the following suggestions,

"Weare shoes made of lyons skinne. Weare a plaster of Montacana upon your feet. Trie the way of transplantation. Give pultesses taken from the part unto doggs, & lett a whelpe lye in the bed with you...

If you are not afraid to bee lame without payne trie the remedie of Agrippa to putt your feet in vinegar...Trie the magnified amulet of Muffetus of spiders leggs wore in deeres skinne or Tortoyses legge cutt from the living Tortoy & wrapt in the skinne of a kid...

To consider that of Cardan whether the gout freeth & preserveth from the stone in the bladder...

To trie the way of purging by Lapis Lazuli...wch is also commended by Fioravanti."

Unfortunately we have no way of knowing whether Browne derived any benefit from any of these recipes as they do not appear again in any of his other writings. However, we do know from his correspondence with his son and fellow physician Edward Browne (1642-1708) that the cures Browne prescribed for his patients and Edward's, though

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135 Browne, *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, Vol.1, pp.259-60; *ibid.* p.871. Robbins notes that the 'Modernes' may have included Aldrovandi and Jean Riolan the Elder (a follower of Fernel).
Chapter 1

perhaps lacking some of the sympathetic magic found in his private commonplace books, were nevertheless similar.\textsuperscript{138}

If Browne himself kept a commonplace books then his criticism of their use must in itself be regarded as a paradox. As he noted,

\begin{quote}
There is a certain list of vices committed in all ages, and declaimed against by all Authors, which will last as long as humane nature, or digested into common places may serve for any theme, and never be out of date until Doomes day.\textsuperscript{139}
\end{quote}

There was then a certain sense of inevitability about the tendency to vulgarise ancient authors and recycle their errors. It was part of the human condition since the Fall of Man. Though Browne would never be aware of it, the final irony was that his own errors would be recycled later by Enlightenment commentators and nineteenth century folklorists – though by this time Browne’s own sense of the perpetual state of human folly had been replaced by a growing belief in human progress. As Samuel Johnson suggested almost a century after Browne’s death,

\begin{quote}
It might now be proper, had not the favour with which it was at first received filled the kingdom with copies, to reprint it [Pseudodoxia Epidemica] with notes, partly supplemental and partly emendatory, to subjoin those discoveries which the industry of the last age has made, and correct those mistakes which the author has committed, not by idleness or negligence, but for want of Boyle’s and Newton’s philosophy.\textsuperscript{140}
\end{quote}

For the time being though the vulgarisation of medical knowledge was central to its dissemination. Chapter 2 looks further at this process, analysing, in detail, the manner in which it occurred.

\textsuperscript{138} For example, Thomas Browne to Edward Browne 17 November 1679 in The Letters of Sir Thomas Browne, ed. Geoffrey Keynes, (London: Faber and Faber, 1946), p.159
\textsuperscript{139} Browne, Pseudodoxia Epidemica, Vol.1, p.33
Chapter 2

Commonplace Medicine

Introduction

This chapter investigates the role that commonplace books played in the dissemination and vulgarisation of medical knowledge. It begins by looking at the ancient theory of commonplaces tracing its uptake in the Middle Ages where it was primarily part of scholarly religious culture, and then in the early modern period where, when thanks in part to the spread of writing and then print as means of communication, its uses broadened to include a wide range of humanist, diplomatic, and medical interests. This is followed by a consideration of some of the epistemological issues involved in the study of commonplace books. These include the use of commonplaces as a mode of argumentation and communication, the acceptance or rejection of commonplace knowledge, and the links between oral and written culture. These themes are then examined in relation to medical commonplace books as kept first by those who studied medicine formally at either Oxford or Cambridge; second, by educated laymen who have received no formal medical instruction; and finally, by a priest who both treated himself and his family, as well as members of his local community.

The culture of commonplaces and commonplace books. Classical models.

Commonplaces, as M.A. Screech notes, ‘are by definition, passages of general application’. The definition is from Aristotle’s *Topica* and relates to his aim, as set out at the beginning of the text, ‘to discover a method by which we shall be able to reason from generally accepted opinions (*endoxa*) about any problem set before us and shall ourselves, when sustaining an argument, avoid saying anything self-contradictory.’¹ The

method he arrived at involved organising information into commonplaces (koinos topos) under topical headings or places (topoi). Information was first divided into general themes and then into more particular subjects, a taxonomy that reflected Aristotle's own division of the world into the specific and the universal. Though commonplaces related primarily to the oral and aural culture of rhetoric and oratory in which the recall of pithy, consistent, and recognisable arguments was paramount, the distance between this essentially unwritten or natural form of memorisation and artificial or written memory systems was small. Commonplace books were regarded as a written extension of the way in which ideas were memorised and recalled. The spatial organisation of ideas in writing was the corollary to the spatial or architectural organisation of ideas in the mind. Users of both natural and artificial memory schemes were encouraged to travel from 'place to place' recalling information that they had deposited.

Transmission to medieval and early modern society

Aristotle's method of recording and organising information was one of the most influential innovations in a period that extended from the twelfth century until well into the seventeenth century. Though both his Topics and his Rhetoric (which also dealt with commonplaces) were known in the middle ages, the majority of his ideas were transmitted through the works of Cicero (or Tully as he was known). These included the Topica of Cicero and De Inventione as well as a number of glosses and commentaries by authors such as Boethius and Albertus Magnus. It was Cicero who translated Aristotle's koinos topos into the Latin loci communes or commonplaces.

Both commonplaces and memory in general played an important part in medieval life. Manuscripts illustrating the seasons, the winds, and the Zodiac were laid out spatially both as an indication of their subject matter and as an aid to memory; poems were constructed using mnemonic schemes; medieval recipe books (along with a number of later examples) were laid out from 'head to toe', a capite ad calcem, mapping disease onto

middle ages see Mary Carruthers, The Book of Memory. A Study of Memory in Medieval Culture, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990)
2 Moss, p.3
3 This of course is a central theme in Frances Yates, The Art of Memory, (London: Pimlico, 1996; orig. 1966)
4 On transmission see Moss, pp. 4-23. Also important were Macrobius (fl. 400 A.D.) whose Saturnalia discusses Seneca's work, and Quintilian.
5 John Symcotts' commonplace book (described below) was also laid out in this manner.
the body and helping readers locate the required cure; recipes were concocted or
borrowed from Arab or Jewish authors in order to produce the physiological conditions
that were required for a good memory. Commonplaces had perhaps their greatest
influence in the universities and cathedral schools that emerged in the twelfth and
thirteenth centuries. Here they were central to the medieval trivium of grammar, logic,
and rhetoric, providing scholars with a means of recording their reading and formulating
arguments both on paper and in their scholastic debates. The purpose of commonplaces
was both pedagogic and moral. According to the twelfth-century teacher Hugh of St.
Victor, keeping commonplaces was, along with a moderate diet and adequate sleep, the
key to a well-ordered memory and an example of moral goodness; whilst in the
thirteenth century the theologian Thomas Aquinas suggested that students compile
commonplaces from the Bible and the patristics, as well as pagan authors, under
headings of 'virtue' and 'vice', in order to assist in their studies and in the writing of
sermons.

These moral and theological aspects of keeping commonplaces survived and were
strengthened by the Reformation. In his The Rule of Reason (1551), Thomas Wilson
extolled the value of commonplaces in persuading doubters and apostates that Protestant
beliefs were both logical and correct. Commonplaces were a God-given means by which
man could recover some (though not all) of the knowledge that had been lost at the Fall.
As he noted,

Manne, by nature hath a sparke of knowelge [sic], and by the secrete woorking
of God, iudgeth after a sorte, and discerneth good from euil. Before the fal of
Adam, this knowelege was perfeicte, but through offence, darkenesse folowed,
and the bright Hght was taken awaie. Wisemen therefore, consideryng the
weakness of mannes witte, and the blindnesse also, wherein we are all drouned:
inuented this Arte, to helpe us the rather, by a natural order, to find out the
trueth.7

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6 Carruthers, p.233. Though Aristotle had partly located the memory in the heart (on account of
its role in the production of pneuma or vital spirit), Galen, in his De Loci Affectis shifted the focus
wholly to the brain (the fifth ventricle). A cool and moist brain was thought to be best for the
memory. If the brain was too cold, then recipes involving warming materia medica (such as the
anacardum nut) were used. If it was too hot then washing of the head with cooling camomile
solution might be recommended. Many of these recipes survived into the early modern period.
See for example, Guiliemus Gratarolus, De Memoria Reparanda, (Tiguri, 1553) translated by
Willyam Fulwod as The Castel of Memorie, (1562)
7 Thomas Wilson, The Rule of Reason, Conteyning the Arte of Logique, (1551), p.8
Keeping a commonplace book was intimately related to reading and writing, activities which, as David Cressy has suggested, were a fundamental aspect of the Godly culture that emerged with the English Reformation. As clergymen stressed the importance of personal immersion in scripture, so too, the practice of keeping commonplace books widened to include an increasing number of laymen. Both manuscript and printed versions were available and were used by those who wished to order and contemplate their readings, picking out phrases or passages that were appropriate to their own spiritual well-being. The Protestant martyrologist John Foxe published *Loci Communes* (1557), a thousand page commonplace book which was largely blank but which provided a skeleton structure of Latin headings and subheadings under which the devout would place the *florilegia* or flowers of their study. A century later, John Evelyn's favoured Anglican preacher John Cosin wrote to his friend Christopher Lord Hatton giving detailed recommendations for 'paper books' which would contain pre-formatted headings for theology and secular and ecclesiastical history as well as 'choyce and difficult places of ye scripture.' Evelyn himself dedicated one of his three folio commonplace books to theology, using commonplaces to record his extensive reading of scripture and devotional literature as well as material on other religions and sects under headings such as 'sacramentum' and 'meditatio'. Finally, Locke, in his *A New Method of Making Common-place Books* (1706) demonstrated how a religious text could be divided up according to a series of two letter codes.

Theological commonplace books were often supplemented with material from other subject areas. Thanks in part to the work of Protestant reformers such as Melanchthon, and the emphasis they placed on the supremacy of things (*res*) before words (*verba*), commonplace books were, "a mode of apprehending the world" and an aid to the study

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of natural history. Medicine and theology were also allied, physically on the pages of commonplace books where the actual task of writing was regarded as morally good, and by the prevailing monist view of a healthy soul and a healthy body. Just as memorisation enabled the ordering of thoughts that had been imprinted on the soul (described as a wax tablet by classical authors), so, too, commonplace books allowed for the ordering of thoughts on the page.

Such connections were not limited to Protestants. They also existed in pre-Reformation society. Robert Reynes of Acle, a church-reeve living in the last quarter of the fifteenth century stored a wealth of prayers and charms, many of which were medical, in his commonplace book; whilst the devout Yorkshire gentleman Robert Thornton recorded how a cup of water blessed by reciting a prayer from St Paul would bring safe delivery to pregnant women. Two hundred years later, and stripped of much of the intercessionary power that was believed to lie in spells and charms, Evelyn's commonplace books also included headings such as 'preces' and 'salus' as well as a number of recipes. Finally, the practice of medicine by clergymen, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, raised the ire of zealous Calvinists, is evident in the early seventeenth-century commonplace books of John Moulton and Henry Fowler. As vicar of the Church of Bartholemew the Less in North Waltham, Hampshire, Moulton used his commonplace headings to write sermons on ingratitude, wretchedness and humility (most of his quotations came not from scripture but from Xenophon and Suetonius), while at the same time providing recipes for 'ye stone, or strangulation or any gripping of the body.'

Growth in the use of commonplace books was linked to developments in Renaissance humanism both at the level of the university and the school. These developments were

12 For example Cicero, *Ad Herennium*, "For the places are very much like wax tablets or papyrus, the images like letters, the arrangement and disposition of the images like the script, and the delivery like the reading", quoted in Yates, p.22. Carruthers, p.86 notes the connection between the soul as a wax tablet and the Benedictine practice of writing on wax tablets.
14 For example BL Evelyn MS 54(1), p.29
aided in the fifteenth century by Manuel Chrysoloras’ revival of Quintillian’s recommendation that students keep notebooks, and by the dissemination of that advice in influential texts such as Rudolph Agricola’s *De Inventione Dialectica* (c.1487) and Erasmus’ *De Ratione Studii* (1512) and *De Copia* (1512). Pupils at St Paul’s School (where Erasmus’ recommendations were adopted by its founder John Colet), were encouraged to compose themes and to take exemplars from their reading of historical episodes, fables, quotations, apophthegms, and proverbs (such as those found in Erasmus’ *Adagia*). Erasmus advised pupils and teachers alike to use commonplace books in order that each,

...should provide himself with places and clearly defined sections and systematic procedures worked out for this purpose, so that whenever he lights on anything worth noting down, he may write it in the appropriate section.\(^{16}\)

According to the Spanish humanist Juan Luis Vives, commonplace books should be laid out in the following way, ‘Make a book of blank leaves of a proper size. Divide it into certain topics, so to say, nests. In one jot down the names of subjects of daily converse...in another sententiae.’\(^{17}\)

The uptake of recommendations such as these can also be seen in the sixteenth-century statutes and charter of Rivington School. Here pupils were encouraged to,

refer every thing they read to some common place, as to virtue, vice, learning, patience, adversity, prosperity, war, peace, &c. for which purpose they must have paper books ready to write them in.\(^{18}\)

From an early age pupils were made familiar with the use of commonplace books in the study of Latin grammar. During the seventeenth century, fifth and sixth form pupils at Eton were taught both to follow classical models for keeping commonplaces and to use *sententiae* in their disputations, a practice which William Badger, master of Winchester School during the 1560s, likened to the mustering of forces and the ordering of the

\[\text{Sources:}\]

\(^{15}\) Wellcome MS 571. f.129r, f.1r, f.266r, n.p (large sections of this manuscript are unfoliated). On both Moulton and Fowler see below.

\(^{16}\) Erasmus *De Ratione Studii*, quoted in Moss, p.103

\(^{17}\) Quoted in R.R. Bolgar, *The Classical Heritage and its Beneficiaries*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), p.272; Carruthers, p.35. The likening of a topic to a nest in which commonplaces might rest can be traced to Plato’s description of the soul as a caged bird. Hugh of St Victor likened the placement of commonplaces, either in the memory or in writing, to a dovecote. Other metaphors compared the memory to a honeycomb or, in the case of the humanist Conrad Gesner, an apothecary’s shop with its many drawers for different drugs.

ranks. Both within the universities, where in the main Aristotle's method held its position against the innovations of Peter Ramus (d.1572), and outside, in the courts and in the expanding area of sixteenth-century diplomacy and bureaucracy, manuscript commonplace books as well as printed versions such as Ralph Lever's *The Arte of Reason, Rightly Term'd Witcraft* (1550) assisted humanists in their appropriation of what Pierre Bourdieu termed 'cultural capital' — that is the authoritative language of classical antiquity.

**Commonplaces and communication**

According to an epistemology established by Aristotle in his *Rhetoric*, authority lay not in the empirical value of a statement but in the respectability and credibility of its author. An author's 'testimony' was described as,

\[\text{a voluntary concession of a known thing. Now of necessity it must be either probable or improbable or doubtful to be believed, and in a like manner the witness must be either credible, or not to be believed or of doubtful credit.}^{22}\]

*Sententiae* and commonplaces had value because their original authors were respected and the information that they conveyed was generally accepted by their audience, whether a listener or listeners, as in the case of rhetoric or oratory, or a reader or readers of a text. According to Aristotle, commonplaces were either 'universally accepted opinions', or

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19 This military metaphor was still in use in the 1640s. Thomas Fuller noted in *The Holy and Profane State* how a commonplace book might 'contain many Notions in garrison, whence the owner may draw out and army into the field on competent warning'. Quoted in Beal, p.131.


22 Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, edited and translated by J.H. Freese, (London: Heinemann, 1926), p.17 (I, ii, 1356a). As Aristotle noted in the same passage, 'Persuasion is achieved by the speaker's personal character when the speech is so spoken as to make us think him credible. We believe good men more fully and more readily than others: this is true generally whatever the question is, and absolutely true where exact certainty is impossible and opinions are divided.'
those opinions 'which commend themselves to the majority or to the wise — that is to all of the wise or to the majority or to the most famous and distinguished of them.'

Translated into the early modern context, the question of what was commonplace opinion comes to encompass broader issues about the transmission and acceptability of knowledge. Commonplaces functioned in a way that was commensurate with the context in which they were used. Quotations from classical texts such as Horace and Galen were employed by learned physicians in the expectation that their readers had also been exposed to a humanist education and would therefore recognise the wisdom embodied in the tags and nod approvingly at their use. This said, and as we have seen, knowledge could also be transmitted in ways that did not involve formal education — through the theatre, through character sketches and proverbs (though even here methodological questions remain over whether books of proverbs can actually imply their common usage or merely their collection and filtering by the literate and respectable), and by other forms of oral communication. Tags and motifs were frequently appropriated in ways that subverted and mocked their original purpose. Commonplaces themselves did not always come from literary sources and even where they did the initial source and context might either have been forgotten, or have declined in credibility (an eventuality considered by Aristotle). As one commentator noted in the mid-seventeenth century,

...thou shalt find in one peice [sic] a collection of all variety of men, from the scepter to the spade. And that not taken from the repeated Traditions of outworn Antiquity, but from the greatest part collected from several passages even in our Age and Memory...

Commonplace books were capable of holding knowledge from a wide range of different sources and of reflecting different patterns of knowledge transmission.

Manuscripts and printed books

23 Aristotle, *Topics*, p. 275 (1, i, 1009)
Though until this point little distinction has been made between printed and manuscript texts, it is important to stress the difference that each medium made to the transmission of knowledge. While printing has, with some justification, been cited for the effect that it had on the dissemination of religious and scientific ideas— it did, after all, allow ideas to spread faster and at lower cost than before— it is through manuscript commonplace books that we can gain some appreciation of the way in which printed texts were received.

As Walter Ong noted some time ago, manuscript culture embodies a far more 'open' approach to information than that which is available with print. As we shall see below, manuscripts offered their readers, writers, and owners, the opportunity to organise their ideas spatially, to make additions, deletions, comments, and illustrations in ways which though not missing (witness for example the copious notes and marginalia present in many books), were different from those found in printed texts. The differences were summed up well by the late French anthropologist Michel de Certeau in his book *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1974). He noted here that,

> Readers are voyagers: they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across field they did not write, despoiling the wealth of Egypt to enjoy it themselves. Writing accumulates, stocks up, resists time by the establishment of a place and multiplies its production through the expansionism of reproduction...whether it is a newspaper or Proust, the text has meaning only through its readers.

Whereas printed texts are mainly consulted by people who have had nothing to do with their authorship, users of manuscripts can be both readers and authors, responsible for recording information in a manner that gives it meaning both at the time of writing and (where a text is expected to be consulted again or amended), in the future. Such considerations are of importance when we consider that many medical commonplace books were either read or added to by numerous people from different educational backgrounds over a period of time that could last anywhere from a few years to several centuries. The commonplace book of the Bedfordshire physician John Symcotts was,

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27 Interestingly, keepers of commonplace books tended also to make copious notes in printed texts. Witness for example John Evelyn's Bible (BL Evelyn MS 46/1) which contains numerous marginal notes.
from the mid 1630s until the late 1650s, also used by his partner W. Wells and their two assistants Gervase Fulwood and Edward Johnson, and a dozen or so entries in a later hand can be dated to 1686-8 and 1694. Henry Fowler (1583-ca.1643), rector of the Gloucestershire village of Minchinhampton made numerous additions to a commonplace book that had belonged to Augustine Spinney, ‘cheefe chaunter’ (and therefore a Catholic) in the village Lammas House sometime prior to its dissolution during the reign of Edward VI. Finally, and perhaps most remarkably, the Fairfax commonplace book was in almost continuous use from the 1550s when it was begun by humanist educated members of the Northumbrian Fairfax family, until the 1720s when it passed into the hands of the Green family.

Clues to the way in which the different users of a commonplace book interacted can be gleaned from its text and from the way in which it was laid out. A note made by Henry Fowler on the opening page of his commonplace book stating 'Noli me tangere vide ad litteram N' is added as 'vide ad N' both to Spinney’s existing text and recipe in Fowler’s hand, throughout the text. While this may appear cryptic, noli me tangere was in fact a painful skin disease that resulted in facial disfigurement and many of the recipes (a number of which come from medieval sources) refer to guttae or spots. In this case, the use of a capital 'N' was perhaps intended to guide other sufferers from noli me tangere towards recipes for its cure. Pictures and symbols might also serve this purpose. A number of Fowler’s cures for ‘ye bytinge of A madd dog’ are accompanied by an illustration of a dog’s head (see below figure 1). Elsewhere recipes are marked by finger pointers, flowers, and pictures of birds. The latter may also be a pun on his surname.

29 Wellcome MS 757, f.183r. Fowler’s notes that ‘This Augustine Spinney lived in the lamas howse at Minchinhampton in com Glouc: he was a cheefe Chaunter, and was master unto my dearest mother Eli: Armstronge’. Though Fowler dates the dissolution of the chantry to ‘the beginning of Queene Elizab: time’, it was in fact dissolved in 1548. On this point see William Page (ed.), *The Victoria History of the County of Gloucester,* (London: A. Constable and Company, 1907-96), Vol. 11, pp.200-203 hereafter cited as *VCH, Gloucestershire.*
30 The provenance of the manuscript is described by George Weddell in his facsimile of the text published as *Arcana Fairfaxiana Manuscripta,* (Newcastle: Mawson, Swan and Morgan, 1890).
31 Wellcome MS 757, f.18r. Noli me tangere is discussed in *Healing and Society in Medieval England a Middle English Translation of the Pharmaceutical Writings of Gilbertus Anglicus,* edited with an introduction and notes by Faye Marie Getz, (Madison, Wisconsin and London: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), p.87. Fowler owned several copies of Anglicus’ *Compendium Medicinae* and it is possible that he took his recipes from these.
32 Wellcome MS 757, f.21v
Figure 1. Wellcome MS 757, f.21v from the commonplace book of Augustine Spinney and Henry Fowler
Though few medical commonplace books contain pictures and ciphers as numerous and as idiosyncratic as those found in Henry Fowler's text, their presence should not surprise us. They were integral to the early modern process of recording information, whether from reading or from oral communication, and then recalling that information at a later date. In common with recipes themselves, ciphers and pictures were a form of shorthand, a means either of prompting the reader into a chain of recollection, or, as we have seen above, of directing the reader towards associated information. In keeping with Aristotle's theory of memory commonplaces, pictures and symbols worked according to similitude. A picture of a dog was used because it corresponded most closely with the experience of being bitten and hence the impression which had been imprinted on the soul. Writing recalled experiences that were already held in the reader's memory. In common with reading, it was a material expression of what, for much of the early modern period, was regarded as a physiological process.

Much in the same way that the use of commonplaces in rhetoric relied on the speaker and his listeners sharing a common body of classical knowledge, manuscript commonplace books relied on their readers sharing a common understanding of the recipes, ciphers, and symbols contained within the text. In the course of reading and interpreting the text the reader filled in the gaps. As we shall see below, this assumption of shared or tacit knowledge is one reason why many medical recipes lack long theoretical explanations or justifications for their use. Recipes, as the

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34 For the changing nature of these activities see Adrian Johns, 'The Physiology of Reading in Restoration England', in James Raven, Helen Small and Naomi Tadmor (eds), *The Practice and Representation of Reading in England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 138-161

35 This aspect of reading has been recognised by literary critics. See for example Wolfgang Iser, 'Interaction between the text and the reader' in Andrew Bennett (ed.), *Readers and Reading*, (London: Longman, 1995), pp.20-31. Iser's work needs to be approached with care when dealing with texts from the early modern period as it is based on the psychoanalytical researches of R.D. Laing and the Tavistock School. Whereas Iser posits 'asymmetry' between the text and the human experience Aristotelians stressed symmetry. A more historically contextualised approach to the problem is Stanley Fish, *Self-Consuming Artifacts, The Experience of Seventeenth-Century Literature*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1974).
anthropologist Jack Goody notes, were generalised statements of ingredients and procedures in which much was regarded as a constant and therefore omitted.\(^{36}\)

**Commonplace books and medical study**

Commonplace books were of prime importance to sixteenth-century medical students the majority of whom would have already been familiar with their use through grammar school education and because their medical studies took place either after or, more frequently, concurrent to their studies in the arts.\(^{37}\) Though, as we have seen in the previous chapter, Girolamo Mercuriale had warned his students against the immoderate use of *compendia*, he nevertheless encouraged them to compile, *thesauri* [or notebooks] and *promptuaria* [or memoranda], in which you may have whatever is worth memorising and noting down arranged topically: you can store these and come back to them as occasion demands. They can be commonplaces, causes, signs, diseases, prophylactics, cures, drugs, diet, manual operations, and the like...From these *thesauri* you will amass a vast collection of materials, and then from writing them down and continually inspecting them your knowledge will increase.\(^{38}\)

Aided though not indebted to the thin stream of English medical students returning from periods of study in Italian universities, practices such as these were followed by medical students at Oxford and Cambridge. Here commonplace books and the habit of borrowing books and manuscripts from the private libraries of their tutors helped students make up for the relative paucity in the availability of the latest continental texts.\(^{39}\) If a student could not obtain a text he simply copied the commonplaces, memoranda, or annotations of someone who had been able to read it. As Peter Jones


\(^{37}\) The rule establishing study in the arts as a prerequisite to the study of medicine was established in Padua in 1330 and stiffened in the fifteenth-century to a minimum of five years. Similar recommendations were adopted at Oxford. On this point see Gillian Lewis, ‘The Faculty of Medicine’ in *The History of the University of Oxford*, (ed.), James McConica, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), pp.213-56 especially p.217. As Lewis notes, strict enforcement of these rule must have been difficult to fulfil.


\(^{39}\) See for example Edward Bruer's commonplace book (c. 1630) Wellcome MS 159. Bruer copied out large sections of Ulrich von Hutten's *De Guaiaci Medicina et Morbo Gallico* (first ed. publ. 1519)
notes in his study of late sixteenth-century Cambridge and the physician Thomas Lorkyn, this was one way in which information might be disseminated amongst students.\textsuperscript{40}

Students tended to copy out whatever they regarded as useful either to their studies or to their own medical practice, something which, given apprenticeships and the pressing financial need of many students, often occurred long before they had received any medical qualifications. This is illustrated by the commonplace book of William Lant, a medical student at Oxford during the late sixteenth century. The majority of Lant’s entries are brief notices of the texts that he had read. These included classical texts such as Galen, Celsus, Dioscorides, and Pliny, a Latin translation of the tenth-century Arab author Mesue, as well as more modern authors like Fernel and Cardano, and vernacular texts such as William Turner’s \textit{New Herball} and Thomas Elyot’s \textit{Castel of Helthe}.\textsuperscript{41} Lant also used commonplaces to answer medical questions, arranging his material in the manner of a scholastic debate with \textit{loci ad confirma} and \textit{loci contra}. Dealing with the question of whether the brain functions best in the warmth or in the cold (a question that Galen had dealt with in \textit{On the Affected Parts}), Lant cited the same authors (Aristotle, Galen, and Fernel) to both sides of the argument before following Galen’s line that cold and moist conditions were most suitable for the brain. He neither indicated any errors in or inconsistencies between his texts, nor did he engage in any philological issues in the way that had been suggested by Italian humanists and their English followers.\textsuperscript{42}

Practices such as these extended to those who had obtained their medical qualifications. John Woolton, a fellow of All Souls College, Oxford and, in 1599, an Oxford MD, read widely from the annotated volumes and memoranda of others, using his commonplace book to copy out whatever he thought was interesting or might be of use. Many of his recipes came from the manuscript notes of John Edwards, a fellow at Corpus Christi College, Oxford in the 1530s, or from vernacular texts such as William Bullein’s \textit{Government of Health} (1558). He ransacked the medieval writings of John of

\textsuperscript{40} Peter Murray Jones, ‘Reading Medicine in Tudor Cambridge’, in Vivian Nutton and Roy Porter (eds), \textit{The History of Medical Education in Britain}, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1995), p.167. Lorkyn had obtained medical texts while travelling on the Continent.

\textsuperscript{41} Bodleian MS Rawlinson D213, ff. 3r-4v. ‘An Inventory of my books 1594 Feb 14’; Foster, \textit{Alumni Ox.}, lists one William Lant who graduated from Christ Church in 1559 receiving his MA (but never an MD) from Magdalen in 1563 suggesting that parts of the text may be older than the date given for the inventory (which may have been composed towards the end of Lant’s life).
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Gaddesden (ca. 1280-1361), Bartholemew the Englishman (fl. ca. 1220-1250), and Gilbert Anglicus (fl. ca. 1240), for cures for fluxes, haemorrhoids and gonorrhoea. Though many of these recipes were in Latin, Woolton seems on occasion to have been unsure of the materia medica involved, annotating the word ‘ericii’ (a misspelling of ericius) with ‘a hedghogge and urchin’ and while he began his commonplace book with the claim that his notes had been ‘cleaned of the errors of various scribes’, at no point are any of these errors discussed or elaborated on in the manner that we have seen in the previous chapter with Joubert, and later in the seventeenth century, with Browne. Instead, Woolton based his remedies to set bones, ‘to stir up lust’, or to ‘make chaste eunuchs’ on ‘verissimo traditur’ or true, handed tradition. When, in the case of the Florentine neo-Platonist Marsilio Ficino, his sources were modern and fashionable, he simply gave the name as proof for the cure’s efficiency.

Only infrequently did Woolton go beyond the authority invested in an author’s name or reputation and attempt to give some form of empirical credibility to his therapies. Some of his commonplaces have been graded from A to D and given the Latin tag ‘probatum’, proven. Though this tag might be taken as an indication that Woolton actually tried his recipes, either by taking them himself or by administering them to his patients, they offer no guarantee that that was actually the case. As Claire Jones notes, Latin efficacy tags such as ‘probatum est’ were a standard way of closing a medieval recipe. They were frequently added to vernacular recipes in order to provide assurance for the patient and an air of learning for the practitioner. The claims they made could go all the way back to ancient texts where tags were also used to bolster the authority of an author. This certainly seems to be the case with the two occasions on which Woolton used the tags ‘experimento’ and ‘experimentum’; in the first instance to refer to the work of Sclanus

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42 Bodleian MS Rawlinson D213, ff.24r-25r; Durling, De Modo Studendi, p.184 and p.191. Mercuriale recommended that commonplace books be used alongside lecica and commentaries to investigate philological inconsistencies in ancient texts.
43 BL Sloane MS 249 f.33r
44 BL Sloane MS 249 f.87r
45 BL Sloane MS 249 f.1r
46 BL Sloane MS 249 f.9r-v
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Constaninopolitanus, and in the second to refer to a wonder panacea for fevers.\textsuperscript{48} Where learned practitioners did genuinely seek to substantiate their medical knowledge with empirical evidence, they tended to cite individuals they had cured or whom they knew as having been cured. So for example the anonymous author of a sixteenth-century commonplace book simply noted at the end of his recipe 'Mistress Lambferd...apoplexia', and elsewhere 'Doctor Godwin' to indicate the presence of a 'good cure'.\textsuperscript{49} As with the finger pointers and symbols used by Henry Fowler, learned physicians might also use crowns and finger pointers to indicate the best remedies.\textsuperscript{50}


Commonplace books functioned both as repositories for remedies and as case books. They allowed their users to store the fruits of their own practical experience, and, because manuscript commonplace book often had several authors and readers, the cumulative experience of others.\textsuperscript{51} As historical evidence they give valuable information as to the way in which medical practice took place – to the recording of recipes and cures, notes on the patient's recovery or otherwise (witness for example the entry in one commonplace book, 'Tobias Mathew ox Obit Christi')\textsuperscript{52}, and the practitioner's fee, illustrating how the commonplace book might also serve as a ledger, something which, as Evelyn remarked (citing Cicero's \textit{Pro Quinto Rascio Comodo}), they were originally intended for.\textsuperscript{53} Commonplace books served a very practical purpose. By combining all these different sorts of material, they allowed medical practitioners to carry the essential elements of their practice in one text. This was a necessity in an age when printed books could be large, cumbersome, and expensive, and where practitioners often travelled

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\textsuperscript{48} BL Sloane MS 249 f.15v 'Hoc experimento utitur Sclanus Constantinopolitanus medicus quandoc [sic]; f.45r 'Mirabile experimentm contra omnes febres et curat...'. Possibly the sixteenth-century humanist Salvo Sclanus or the ancient physician Soranus.

\textsuperscript{49} Bodleian MS Rawlinson A369, f.80v, f.108v

\textsuperscript{50} Bodleian MS Rawlinson A393, f.74v

\textsuperscript{51} This combination of \textit{consilia} with \textit{practica} can also be seen in medieval commonplace books. For an example see Peter Murray Jones, 'Harley MS 2558: A fifteenth century medical commonplace book' in M.R. Schleissner, \textit{Manuscript Sources of Medieval Medicine} (Garland, Texas: Garland Press, 1995), pp.35-54. The owner of the manuscript, Thomas Fayreford, recorded 105 \textit{consilia} relating to men, women, and children from a wide range of social backgrounds.

\textsuperscript{52} Bodleian MS Rawlinson A369, f.52v

\textsuperscript{53} Evelyn MS 54(3), preface and Evelyn MS 54(1), p.157; Cicero, \textit{Pro Rascio Comodo}, Loeb edition edited by J.H. Freese, (London: Heinemann, 1984), pp.279-81 'What is the reason why we write our notes carelessly but make-up our ledgers [or commonplace books] carefully?'
widely and in difficult circumstances. While they are often testimony to extensive reading practices, a commonplace book might be one of the few texts a practitioner actually owned.⁵⁴

Many of the practicalities involved in keeping a medical commonplace book are exemplified in the work of the seventeenth-century physician John Symcotts. Symcotts was very much the product of the humanist education and upbringing that has been described above. He was born at Sutton, Sussex, some time around 1592. His father, John Symcotts, was also a physician. He went to Queens College, Cambridge in 1608, taking his B.A. in 1612 and his M.A. in 1615. He received his M.D. from King's College in 1636, though his letters suggest that he was practising medicine in 1628, if not before.⁵⁵ Based in Huntingdon, his practice extended over the relatively wide area of Huntingdonshire, Cambridgeshire and Bedfordshire. The extent of his practice may explain his partnership with another practitioner, W. Wells, and his employment of two assistants, Gervase Fulwood and Edward Johnson.⁵⁶ Fulwood both prepared drugs for Symcotts and acted as a physician in his absence.⁵⁷ During the English Civil War and the Protectorate Symcotts sided with Parliamentarians.⁵⁸ Although this is not reflected directly in his commonplace book, his experience, in 1643, of caring for a number of prisoners suffering from 'jayl fever' may be linked to his use of consilia or case notes as a means of providing an empirical basis for therapies.⁵⁹

The sources of Symcotts' medical knowledge were wide and varied. As with the commonplace entries of other university-trained practitioners, Symcotts' entries show


⁵⁵ Biographical details are taken from F.N.L. Poynter and W.J. Bishop, *A Seventeenth Century Doctor and his Patients: John Symcotts 1592-1662*, (Luton: The Bedfordshire Historical Record Society, 1951), pp.x-xi

⁵⁶ Poynter and Bishop, p.xxi

⁵⁷ Poynter and Bishop, p.xiii, note that Fulwood may have possessed an ecclesiastical license to practice medicine.

⁵⁸ His patients included Oliver Cromwell whom he treated a number of times between 1628 and 1642.

⁵⁹ Poynter and Bishop, p.xi. Perhaps the most immediate comparison is with Thomas Sydenham whose empiricism was also linked to his treatment of epidemic diseases and his use of consilia. On this point see, Andrew Cunningham, 'Thomas Sydenham: Epidemics, Experiment and the "Good Old Cause"', in Roger French and Andrew Wear (eds) *The Medical Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp.164-190
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that he was acquainted with some printed texts in their original form, most notably
those of the Paracelsian authors Oswald Croll (1580-1609), Lazare Rivière (1589-1655),
and Franz Joel (1508-79), and others in a vulgarised form. Vulgarisations could come
from other printed books where the medical recipes were plagiarised or falsely
attributed to a famous practitioner, from another person's commonplace book, or by
word of mouth. A recipe might travel widely before being written down. For example,
a cure for toothache 'Ad sullendos dentes fine dolore', which involved the use of a
powder to bring on 'sneezing and abundance of rheumes to flow wth drawted ease ye
toothache', may have been concocted by the Paracelsian Theodore Turquet de Mayerne
(his name is given), and passed around before finally being given to Symcotts by 'Mr
Williams ye minister'.

Movements such as this seem to have done little to diminish Symcotts' confidence in the
recipe. This was based primarily on practical experience of its success, and perhaps only
secondarily on the reputation of its famous author. Likewise, and in contrast to the
objections of Hart and Cotta described in the previous chapter, Symcotts lacked
particular attachment or opposition to spagyric remedies, or cures based on plants or
animal products, a number of which came from the firm advocate of Galenic medicine,
Petrus Forestus. Though both Poynter and Bishop and Lucinda Beier have, on the
basis of a letter in which he attacks a patient's use of an almanac, portrayed Symcotts
as an opponent of astrological medicine as a whole, such a conclusion is perhaps a little
harsh given that astrology plays a role in his commonplace book. While Symcotts did
think of 'the ancient con[ceit]...but a fancy', he nevertheless provided a recipe for
toothache which involved plugging the tooth with a mixture of wax, the ashes of
earthworms, and the ashes of 'Land-frogges' dried in May while the moon was in the
sign of Aries. He noted alongside the recipe that it came from Franz Joel, a Paracelsian

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60 For example Wellcome MS 798, col. 250 'vid. River. Obs. Com spiritus sulph.' Poynter and
Bishop, p.x. Riviere's works were published in English by Nicholas Culpeper as The Compleat
Practice of Physick, (1655). Joel was professor of medicine at Griefswald. The six volumes of his
Opera Omnia were published between 1616 and 1631. Each page of Symcotts' commonplace
book is divided into two columns each of which has a different number. I have followed this
numbering system.

61 Wellcome MS 798, col.62

62 A similar pattern exists in the casebooks of the Warwickshire physician John Hall (1575-1635).
These show that Hall used Paracelsian remedies alongside those of Forestus. For Hall see Joan
Lane, John Hall and his Patients: the Medical Practice of Shakespeare's Son-in-law, (Stratford-upon-
Avon: The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, 1996)

63 Sir William Vaughan's Natural and Artificial Directions for Health (1600)
whose medical ideas, based as they were on neo-Platonism, dealt with correspondences between materia medica and the heavens.64

Though Symcotts did keep a separate case-book, a number of his cases are recorded alongside the entries in his commonplace book, suggesting again the many purposes that a commonplace book might serve and the value Symcotts saw in correlating recipes he heard or read about in books with practical experience. He would return to a recipe again and again, each time noting its success with different patients. One entry reads as follows,

For fits of ye mother

I give mithridate a draught of muscadine wch will quickly put off the fit. So will a draught of cold water with a little wheat flower mixt
Before the fit comes upon the least presentation, let her putt sneezing powder in ye nose & it prevents a fit, as I saw in Mrs Catharine Payne

Mrs Dorothy Harby found gr. 1 [one grain] pistula, ye best remedy to put away ye fit of wch she tooke very many time, & at last ye fitts much abated, & come more seldom...

Dr Wright gave now & then a spoonful of camphir water (and perhaps of aqua scordic Salii...or such like) wth sugar...

I have found ye much use of oyle of almonds to be exc. for such fitts
Riverius pag. 292 clyster ex oxycrate65

From the evidence found here and elsewhere one might, as Beier has done, conclude that Symcotts was equally open to medical advice from all sections of society.66 In his cure for an eye condition described as a ‘pin and a web’ he noted that the recipe was known amongst ‘country people’ and elsewhere he was praised the mother of a child for a recipe that she had found in ‘an old English physic book’.67 Though these country recipes differed materially from the recipes that Symcotts’ had extracted from spagyric authors — the inaccessibility of spagyric cures was, as we shall see in the following chapter, central to the rhetoric of these authors — they were in many respects similar to

65 Wellcome MS 798, cols. 340-42. Muscadine was a sweet wine and a common base for herbs and drugs. Mithridate was a panacea based on an enormous number of ingredients.
66 Beier, p.106
the cures that he learned about from other local physicians. All generally relied on ingredients that were locally available and easily administered; and although differences existed between plant names as used by physicians and country people, Symcotts was still able and willing to use vernacular plant names.

This said, Symcotts’ apparent openness to medical information requires some qualification. The majority of the cures that he received from country people were given to him by people of higher social standing. His cure for a pin and a web, though attributed to ‘a woman of St. Albans’, had been passed onto him by ‘my Lady Cotton’. Mistress Bugoynes, a patient of Symcotts’ and the provider of a short recipe ‘to direct rheume from ye eyes’, was the daughter of John Burgoyne, the head of a long established Bedfordshire family. This is not to say that Symcotts saw little intrinsic value in country medicines (he noted them down and remarked on their success), or that he shunned direct contact with his social inferiors (his patients included ‘the poor woman of Fenton’ as well as numerous artisans and tradesmen), but rather that it was through family, friends, and local gentlewomen whose standing he recognised, that recipes were passed on. It was perhaps easier to accept medical advice from paying patients whom one attended regularly than from the poor who might only be seen occasionally. This said, even in a context where deference and respect were required, boundaries were present. While Symcotts approved of the counsel provided by the two friends of his patient Richard Powers, it was Powers whom he cautioned for using almanacs and for following the advice of ‘wandering practitioners’ and a healer whose ‘slabbering smells too much of his barber’s shop from whence he went out doctor’. These particular healers were ‘worthy of contempt, not of opposition’. Even if they did not compromise his position in the medical market (which, thanks to a regular and fairly wealthy clientele, seems to have been secure), he certainly regarded them as a risk to the health of his patients. On the other hand at no point in his writings did Symcotts express open hostility towards those who had treated patients without charging or to ‘the vulgar’ (a term which is absent from his writings). He was willing to try out country remedies

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68 Wellcome MS 798, cols. 21-22. Wells’ cure for ‘Watry eyes running continually’ relied on egg yolk.
69 Wellcome MS 798, col. 22. Symcotts noted that country folk called vitriolum romanum the ‘philistines stone’
70 Wellcome MS 798, col. 22; Poynter and Bishop, p.60
71 Poynter and Bishop, pp.23-9
72 Poynter and Bishop, p.29
and even to incorporate them into his practice provided they did not compromise his authority.

**Lay practitioners and their commonplace books**

As with the Oxford medical students at whose commonplace books we have looked, Symcots' commonplace book suggests that the dissemination of medical knowledge came about both through personal study and, perhaps more importantly, a large network of contacts. Much the same was true for lay practitioners.

The Fairfax commonplace book reflects a pattern that can be seen in other early modern texts. Its initial users had undoubtedly received some humanist education either at Oxford or Cambridge, or at home. Sir Thomas Fairfax had been a diplomat in the service of Elizabeth I and his son Edward (fl. 1600), a translator of the poet Tasso, may have served as private tutor to the younger Fairfax.\(^7\) The effect of this educational background can be seen in the hands that are used (in Edward's case an Italian italic script), in the use of Latin, and in the headings and index which exists for earlier entries in the text. It is notable, however, that even these piecemeal attempts to maintain some of the order associated with commonplace books decline during the course of the seventeenth century as users listed their predominantly vernacular recipes in a linear fashion. These changes may reflect both the employment of commonplace books by those who had not been formally trained in their use (a category that would have included many female users) and the commonplace book's declining dominance in humanist education as a whole.

As with recipes found both in Symcots' commonplace book and in the writings of contemporary country apothecaries, the majority of the cures present in the Fairfax manuscript are stated in a shorthand, matter-of-fact manner.\(^7\) Ingredients were given and sometimes, particularly in the case of chemical remedies where an overdose might have been dangerous, quantities too. \(^7\) The assumption being, as was noted above, that preparatory details such as grinding herbs, making an infusion, or otherwise obtaining

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\(^7\) Sir Thomas Fairfax of Denton matriculated from Queen's College, Cambridge in 1577. His brother Henry was a fellow of Trinity College, Cambridge. Venn, Vol.2, p.117

\(^7\) See for example BL Sloane MS 1529 which is the recipe book of an anonymous Buckinghamshire apothecary.
materia medica would be known to the practitioner. A recipe ‘For ye heate of the hearte’ was reduced to the following list,

- Tulip of Roses
- Tulip of violats
- Sirop of violats
- Sirop of endif compound
- Sirop of infusione rosaru vindu
- Sirop de Succo acctosa

Blanket instructions were given. A recipe ‘For ye back’ was followed by the injunction to ‘Eat noe Veal, nor piggs, nor any slimy meat’ — again the assumption being that the healer, or in cases of self-treatment, the sufferer, would be familiar with this sort of advice. As cooking recipes that can also be found in the manuscript, the advice was to ‘use [what] you think good.’ Cures were, with rare exceptions (one recipe required crushed rubies, amber, and pearl), put together with household ingredients. Where one ingredient was unavailable another might be substituted. A recipe ‘for the swelling of any parte’ required camomile flowers but noted ‘if you cannot gett ye flowers, take ye herbs and take new milke and put ye herbs into yt and barlie meale if you can gett no barly meale take otemeal’.

Though humoral theory underlies a number of these recipes, it is rarely stated in any detail. Likewise, little attention is paid to the individual’s humoral constitution. In the case of one recipe, apparently taken from the London based practitioner, Dr Butler, and conveyed to the Fairfaxes by a relative, Lady Fleetwood, via a local woman Mrs Prinne, it was claimed that it ‘purgeth all humors in ye body’, ‘defendeth ye stomach’, and ‘nourisheth ye flesh as it preserveth youth’ — all without allowing ‘ye bloud to putrify’. Similarly in another recipe, the sufferer (who is described as recovering from the point of death) is to be given bay and ‘bayberies’ which ‘voideth all venome and rawe meate lying in the stomach and ye mirre suffreth no corruption in the body of man.’ While the first recipe bears some of the marks of sales patter and an attempt on the part of the original author to show his learning (real or otherwise), there is still an underlying attempt to appeal to popular notions about illness and health. In both cases disease is described in terms of humoral imbalance and bodily corruption, centred in stomach — a

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75 Arcana Fairfaxiana, (ed.) Weddell, p.91. I have followed Weddell’s page numbers because the foliation of the original manuscript is irregular.
76 Arcana Fairfaxiana, p.137, p.102, p.12
77 Arcana Fairfaxiana, p.64, p.51

96
location which, though regarded by Galenists as the main place in which the humours were concocted, also held wider moral and religious signification as the source of bodily decay.  

A manuscript such as the Fairfax commonplace book is perhaps not the right kind of text in which to find discussions about medical humoralism. Such discussions can be found in printed medical handbooks of the period. Sir Thomas Elyot’s *Castel of Helthe* (1534) contained an account of the four humours (blood, yellow bile, black bile, and phlegm) and the six Galenic non-naturals (food and drink; sleep and waking; evacuation and repletion; motion and rest; and the passions or the emotions), and a similar account also occurs in *Regimen Sanitatis Salerni* (1575), an English translation of the famous Salerno manual, to give just one example. Even here, though, we should not assume that the authors of these texts were teaching their readers something that was not already known. Rather, sixteenth-century authors such as Elyot were locating their recipes within the authority of what they regarded to be the orthodox Galenic or Hippocratic view of the body and disease. Though this situation did change in the second half of the seventeenth century, where a new ‘mechanical’ means of describing the body and disease was introduced, these changes, insofar as there might have been a need to give mechanical explanations for recipes, are not present in the Fairfax commonplace book. The small number of recipes which do give detailed instructions (though little in the way of explanation) for their composition, tend to be alchemical or Paracelsian remedies – a feature which may be related to a far older tradition of creating an aura of mystery around the recipe and its author. These recipes include ‘flos ungentorum’ a cure for noli me tangere (the same disease that afflicted Henry Fowler), which is described as coming from ‘Jesus Christ to a recluse by an Angell at ye red hill ... wch wrought many marvells wth yt, and never had any other medicine’; and a weapon-salve attributed to ‘Rodolphus Goclorius’ which, though dated to 1608, may, because it is the hand of Mary Cholmeley (fl.1632), have been noted down later.

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78 Though dealing with a different context (early modern Italy), a fascinating discussion of this topic is Piero Camporesi, *The Incorruptible Flesh. Bodily Mutilation and Mortification in Religion and Folklore*, trans. Tania Croft-Murray and Helen Elson, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), especially chapter 8 which looks at diet.


80 *Arcana Fairfaxiana*, p.21, p.61. Probably Rudolf Goclenius (1572-1618), a Paracelsian and author of *Oratio qua Defenditur Vulnus non Applicato etiam Remedio, circa Ullum Dolorem Curari Naturaliter Posse, si Instrumentum Tantum vel Telum quod Sauciavit, seu quo Vulnus est Inflictum, Peculiari
In contrast to the Symcotts' commonplace and those of other learned physicians, the Fairfax manuscript contains very few references to published texts. Aside from the reference to Rudolf Goclenius, the only other authors mentioned are Dioscorides (the entry 'as diascoridis reporteth lib. 4 chap. 34' appears to have been copied from a secondary text), and the Italian empiric Leonardo Fioravanti whose 'secrets' were, as we have seen in the previous chapter, attacked by Thomas Browne. Though tags such as 'probatum est', or the promissory 'it will help it' and 'it will make them well' are used, authority is in the main constructed by each user making a note of who had given them the information. In some cases information regarding usage has also been added. A recipe 'for ye Ricketts, (in children)' is followed by the date 'Feb. 25. 1632' and the name, 'Lady Fairfax of Steeton'. In this way the manuscript served as a form of diary and as a means of reminding future readers that a recipe had brought some relief from sickness or pain.

The majority of those who made additions to the manuscript were either members of the Fairfax family or, as was the case with the Cholmeley, Sheffield, and Selby families, related to it via marriage. Of the seventeenth-century sources which are acknowledged in the text, twenty-six people were from this group alone. If the condition for membership of the group is expanded to include those who were not related to the Fairfaxes by blood or marriage then the network expands to as many as fifty people. Although the majority of these contacts, family or otherwise, were close to the social status of the Fairfaxes themselves (the female sources are described as 'my Lady' or 'ye Lady'), there are, as with Symcotts' commonplace book, exceptions to this rule. 'Old Mrs Asheton' supplied two recipes, one for consumption and one of crushed amber, 'to
bring away an After-birth', the latter suggesting that she may at some time have been a
midwife; 'Mrs Ayres' provided a remedy based on bitter tasting wormwood to cure
melancholy and 'ye spleen'; and 'Mrs Matthews' and 'Mrs Oglethorpe' both endorsed a
purge. A little further afield 'Mrs Harrison of York' provided 'a caudle to strengthen ye
Backe'. None of these recipes involved anything that would have been recognised by
contemporaries as a chant, a charm, or a sympathetic cure. Where, in the case of one
recipe from 1630s 'to knowe ye K[ing's] Evill', sympathy is involved, the source is
Henry Cholmeley, the brother-in-law of the Rev. Henry Fairfax.®

Seen as a whole, the patterns of information exchange visible in the Fairfax
commonplace book suggests a relatively tight network of contacts, the majority of
whom lived locally. This said, there is some evidence to indicate that during the course
of the early modern period this network opened up to include material from further
afiel. Though not on the scale of eighteenth-century developments (the latter part of
the Fairfax manuscript contains a record of 'Mrs Husely's famous Gister for Worms'
and 'Anderson's Pills'), there are references to cures such as 'Dr Butler's Receipt' and
'Queen Elizabeth's Posset', which suggest that some of the commercial aspects of the
popularisation of medicine were already in place in the seventeenth century. Likewise, a
later reference to Dr Mullen, the London-based surgeon to Charles II and then James II,
suggests that the network had some contact with the capital and its news, something
which earlier in the century would have been enforced by the role of family members as
diplomats, lawyers, and then, in the case of Charles and Fernandino Fairfax,
Roundhead officers. As Clive Holmes notes in a conclusion which in the main fits with
the later work of Richard Cust and F.J. Levy, 'the social experience of the gentry,
particularly their formal education and their involvement with the national capital,
London, ensured that their horizons were not narrowly local'.®

If this was one pattern for the dissemination, testing, and use of medical information by
educated and well connected members of the county gentry, what was the situation like

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84 Arcana Fairfaxiana, p.xxviii-xxix
85 Arcana Fairfaxiana, p.136, p.67, p.69, and p.140. He recommended placing an earthworm on
the scrofulous swelling and observing whether or not the worm turned into earth in which case the
disease was present.
86 Clive Holmes, 'The County Community in Stuart Historiography', Journal of British Studies,
Vol. XIX, No. 2, (1980), p.73; F.J. Levy, 'How Information Spread Among the Gentry,
1550-1640', Journal of British Studies, Vol.21, (1982), pp.11-33; Richard Cust, 'News and
in more remote areas of the country, and in particular, amongst less literate members of the population? Some answers to this question can be found by looking at the medical activities of country clerics. These men frequently acted both as healers for their congregations, and as what historians have later have called 'cultural intermediaries'—links between the literate and those who were either illiterate, or, as was often the case, able to read but not to write. Again commonplace books are useful in this regard as their owners tended to record both what they had read and what they had heard.

In common with wealthier members of the laity, clergymen were part of the small section of society whose education had extended as far as the universities. Prior to becoming rector at Minchinhampton in 1611 Henry Fowler, who came from an established Gloucestershire family, had been educated at Magdalen Hall, Oxford receiving his B.A. in 1605 and his M.A. in 1608. Likewise, John Moulton had been educated at Peterhouse, Cambridge, receiving his B.A. in 1604-5 and his M.A. in 1608. While few clergymen received a formal medical education, it was quite possible to obtain medical knowledge in the context of one's humanist and theological studies, from fellow students and friends, or having left university. Fowler for example described a future fellow of the College of Physicians Richard Hawley (1593-1636) as 'my master' even though at the time he was a fellow student.

The manner in which Henry Fowler accumulated and redistributed medical knowledge can be partially reconstructed thanks mainly to the existence of his commonplace book and because his son, an Oxford educated physician also named Henry, left the

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89 Venn, Vol. 3, p.223

90 Wellcome MS 757, f.120v. Hawley gave Fowler a recipe for those that 'pyse blood'.

91 Foster, *Alumni Ox.*, Vol., p.524. He was educated at Oriel College, Oxford, receiving his B.A. in 1639 aged twenty. He was licensed to practise medicine only as late as 1678 but it is possible that he practised before this date. *Gloucestershire Notes and Queries*, p.147, citing *Mercurius Rusticus*, states that 'young Mr Fowler, a practitioner it seems in physick, had in his study extract
majority of his father's manuscripts (though not his printed books) to Gloucester Cathedral Library. These and a few of other manuscripts held at the British Library are listed below in Table 1.

Table 1. Medical manuscripts belonging to Henry Fowler

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manuscript*</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wellcome MS 757</td>
<td>Commonplace book belonging initially to Augustine Spinney</td>
<td>Written c.1530 with additional material c. 1602 – c.1641</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester MS 6</td>
<td>Gilbert Anglicus, <em>Compendium Medicinae</em> (orig. 1240)</td>
<td>Produced in Lyons in 1510</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester MS 7</td>
<td>Guido de Chaulico (c.1300-68), <em>Chirurgia</em> (orig. 1363)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester MS 15</td>
<td>Excerpta Astrologicae</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester MS 16</td>
<td><em>Medica Quaedam</em></td>
<td>Consists primarily of the 'Articella' (a set of Galenic commentaries)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester MS 18</td>
<td><em>Medica</em></td>
<td>A rare 13th-century English manuscript of the 'Articella'. Also includes translations of Arabic commentaries on Galen, extracts from Bernard of Gordon and Constantine the African, Johannicius, and Arnald of Villanova</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester MS 19 + 23</td>
<td>Friar Henry Daniel, <em>Liber Urticarium</em> (orig. 1379)</td>
<td>Derived mainly from Isaac Judaeus (d.955) Contains notes in Fowler’s hand correlating Daniel’s text with his own experience and additions by his friend Dr Alexander Ramsey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester MS 21</td>
<td><em>Astrologica</em></td>
<td>Written on parchment. Previously belonged to John Argentine (d.1506), Provost of Kings College, Cambridge. Astrological medicine by various Arab authors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester MS 28</td>
<td>William of Conches (fl.1150), <em>De Philosophia Mundi</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BL Royal MS 12.G.IV</td>
<td>Gilbert Anglicus, <em>Compendium Medicinae</em></td>
<td>Also includes recipes by John of Grenborough, a monk at the fifteenth-century monastery of St. Mary’s Coventry. Astrological tables; charms in French, Latin, and English; tracts on the plague and physiognomy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

of pearl, aurum potabilie, confections of pearl...with many other things of admirable use for the preservation of the life of man.'

Table 1a. Other manuscripts of interest belonging to Henry Fowler

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manuscript</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester MS 12</td>
<td><em>Legenda Sanctorum</em></td>
<td>Unfortunately no mention of any medical saints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gloucester MS 4</td>
<td>The grounds of divinity in 114 lectures</td>
<td>f.1 states that the text was written by Fowler's 'serveiture John Harrison' vicar at West-Cranmer, Somerset</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though not necessarily typical of every seventeenth-century priest-physician, these manuscripts reveal that Fowler, like his contemporary John Woolton, derived much of his written information from medieval sources. These included two copies of Gilbert Anglicus' *Compendium Medicinae*, a collection of French, English and Latin charms by the Coventry friar John of Grenborough, as well as two copies of the *Articella*, the standard medieval sourcebook for Galenic commentaries. Some items, most notably a work on medical astrology that had previously belonged to John Argentine (d.1506) provost of King's College, Cambridge, would have been considered valuable by contemporary standards. It is possible that Fowler, like his contemporaries, obtained texts that had been dispersed from the many monastic libraries that had been broken up during the Reformation. In addition to friar Grenborough's text, Fowler's commonplace book contains a recipe for noli me tangere which came, he claims, from a manuscript that had belonged to Jo. Lawrence, a monk at Flaxby Abbey in Yorkshire.\(^{92}\)

While this may look like an early attempt at medical antiquarianism, annotations on the manuscripts themselves suggest that Fowler did in fact use some of these texts (particularly those relating to uroscopy and medical astrology) in his medical practice, tying in what he had read with his own practical experience. For example, his fourteenth century vernacular copy of friar Henry Daniel's *Liber Uricarisum* contained an astrological chart showing how different colours of urine related to one's date of birth and humoral condition. Fowler noted alongside, 'urina in toxo pico non est curabilis Mr Bangor squire beedle of Oxford dyed 1613'.\(^{93}\) Likewise, the section explaining how to predict the outcome of a pregnancy was accompanied by the comment,

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92 Wellcome MS 757, f.17v
93 Gloucester MS 19 + 23, f.98v
Chapter 2

Observed these notes in woman's urine viz 1615...if she be with child her urine shall have in it some small clean sticky [pieces] ...and if troubled be red...tanto nota nunquam...when the child hath life if it be a wenche those signs will want. if a boy none if she finde 60 granida and her urine be as white lead. Prognostications such as these suggest both that Fowler was cognisant with this medieval text and that he regarded it as useful to his medical practice.

Fowler read his texts side by side, adding to his commonplace book as he worked. A charm in Latin and Hebrew is described as coming from an old book; while elsewhere there is the suggestion that he borrowed the recipe for 'Theriaca Andromachi' from the College of Physicians' Pharmacopoeia (1618). He modified and added to the commonplace book either when he tested a recipe himself or when he received news of a successful cure. He annotated Spinney's cure for a 'pyn in the yze' with the comment 'I thank god this cure my Sonne henry of 2: yeares...Minchinhampton'; a recipe to cure bruises by boiling cumin seeds in white wine was accompanied both by the source of the recipe — his friend from the nearby parish of Rodborough, William Burrow — and by a note that it had cured 'my Cousin mr Stephen Fowler de Stonehouse in com Glouc'. Likewise, a cure for consumption was accompanied by a note, 'this recipe cured Mr Culpepper, and so hath cured many: I hadd it from Mr Fenner...of Holy rood in com Gloucester: 1634'. Again, notes such as these served to bring both a degree of authority to the text and a modicum of comfort by reminding the user that a recipe had been used successfully by someone they knew. In Fowler's case, and to a lesser degree in the other texts examined here, the copious use of dates, place names, and locations, may also constitute a rather rough application of the Aristotelian notion of topoi to the task of remembering when, where, and how a cure had been used. It is also possible,

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94 Gloucester MS 19 + 23, f.180r
95 It is also evident that Fowler lent the text to others as it contains additional notes (Gloucester MS 19 + 23, ff. 187v-196r) by his friend Alexander Ramsey, a local healer living in Stroude, on diet and the appearance of urine according to the different seasons.
96 Wellcome MS 757, f.53r 'Tak a knife and cut a manns calfe...and take so much of his blood as may of it write these words: Decroet. odissorum. Decantesetate metate necetorum pilis...'; Wellcome MS 757, f.58v; Pharmacopoeia Londinensis, repr. with an introduction by G. Urdang (Madison, Wisconsin: Madison State Historical Society, 1944), p.173
97 Wellcome MS 757, f.78v. A clouding of the eyes. In common with the symbols and pictures, dots e.g. '?7:' or the more complicated '8'(f.12v) occur frequently in this manuscript and may serve to highlight important pieces of information.
98 Wellcome MS 757, f.22r; Playne, p.84
99 Wellcome MS 757, f.30v
though less likely given the lack of supplementary astrological data, that dates and place names related to some form of astrological medicine.

Though Fowler identified some of his contacts as local doctors (lending a manuscript to one and treating a patient in conjunction with another), the majority of those who provided him with medical information were laymen. In both cases information came by word-of-mouth. He learned from his tenant Andrew Cambridge that elderberry wine boiled with milk was a cure for cramp; Goodwife Newman told him that six spoonfuls of lovage juice boiled together with ‘sallot oyle’ would cure all ague; and ‘old Mr Stanfield’ told him that, if heated, the ‘liquor’ of twelve snails would alleviate any ‘knotts’ or pains. In this last case Fowler noted that Stanfield had tested the cure himself. His attitude towards these recipes was positive. He recorded them either because he thought that they would work or because he had evidence that they had worked. In the case of another of Spinney’s cures for sore eyes he noted that ‘midwife ormond’ regarded it as ‘most true’, or in his own words ‘credo et credo’. It is possible that Fowler’s position as the local rector and his own practice of medicine assisted his congregation either in coming to him for medical advice or in telling him about their own cures. Certainly, his commonplace is peppered with words such ‘dicit’ or so-and-so ‘told me’, all of which indicate the oral communication of information.

Aside from one recipe from a ‘doctor Bennet’ which involved ‘gould in powder’ and ‘oyle of violets’ there are few material differences between the recipes that Fowler received from country people and those that he received from he designated ‘doctor’. All rely primarily on herbs or on materia medica derived from animals (fat, excreta, etc). Though some of these ingredients can be traced to written sources – bear’s fat, a constituent in a cure for ague, can for example be found in Pliny’s Natural History – there is no immediate reason to do so. The assumption that literate people derived their medical knowledge from written sources while the illiterate relied on oral culture for information may support a ‘top-down’ view for the diffusion of knowledge (and hence

100 Gloucester MS 19 + 23, f.22r. Fowler refers to Ramsey as ‘Alexander Ramsey: doctor; Wellcome MS 757 ff.34v-35r. Fowler referred ‘mistris Ceyle’ whose arms ‘were in a convulsion’ to ‘Learned Doctor Hall’; perhaps William Hall, rector of nearby Avening; Playne, p.102
102 Wellcome MS 757, f.15v ‘fatt of...Norway wylde Beare mixed whyth...Spirits of wyne...apply it warm it is a most sure thinge to solve any kinde of Ague...Mr Rob. Moaringo.’ Pliny, Natural History, (London: William Heinemann, 1940), p.53 (VIII, liv, 127)
the 'cultural lag' that we find in works on medical folklore), but it is not useful in this context. As we can see here, and in the other examples surveyed, there is plenty of evidence to suggest tier upon tier of oral transmission amongst those who could read. While justifications for the use of *materia medica* may lie in ancient texts (and Geoffrey Lloyd suggests even these may just have been an attempt to give prestige to what was at the time primarily an oral tradition), this need not exclude duplication or popularisation in oral culture.\(^{103}\)

The medical properties of plants may have been known through their use in cookery or through the names of plants. Freshly ground pepper (one way of adding 'heat' to foods), may, by extension, have been regarded as a way of curing colds and agues.\(^{104}\) Saxifrage, which is mentioned in a number of Fowler's remedies, was thought to have a sympathetic effect on 'the stone' and 'the gravel' (kidney and urinary complaints) both because it grew on stony ground and (in a manner that may have been known to those could read Latin) because its name derived from the Latin 'saxifragus' or stone-breaking. Though the ancient system of correspondences and analogies which underwrote the use of herbs such as saxifrage would lose ground in the course of the seventeenth century (for reasons which will be discussed later in this thesis), it is fair to say that it was still prominent in the 1630s, both among neo-Platonists who held an emblematic world view, and among wider society. Where opposition did exist it came, as we saw in the last chapter, primarily from those Calvinists who criticised neo-Platonism on theological grounds.

Fowler's commonplace book contains four healing charms. One is in Augustine Spinney's hand, one is from an 'old book', and the other two are from local women, Goodwife Tynnes and Goodwife Sherrington, and are in Fowler's hand. Though as with the Fairfax commonplace book, these charms represent only a small number of the total remedies present in the text, they are not marked out as being different.\(^{105}\) Goodwife Sherrington's charm for the 'bytinge of a madd dogge' is located among a number of other herbal remedies which are written in Spinney's hand and which deal

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\(^{104}\) Wellcome MS 757, f.12r

\(^{105}\) It is possible that Fowler knew of other charms as some are present in the collection now kept as BL Royal MS 12.G.IV. No annotations are present in the text.
with the same affliction.\footnote{Wellcome MS 757, f.21v. For example 'take plantayne and stamp it and lay it to the wound. Animal saliva was regarded as a poison and an affliction of the \textit{tota substantia}. Though they were regarded as being of questionable medical orthodoxy, cures for poisons (including amulets, charms and treacles) had existed since antiquity.} The charm consisted of writing the words, ‘Arebes: Rebees: Repers: Aproenus: Appollu: qui.’ onto ‘cheese or juice leaves’ and allowing the sufferer to eat it. It is a vulgarisation of Goodwife Tynnes’ treatment for the same ailment.

\begin{verbatim}
nara fara gara 
fara gara nara 
gara nara fara 
Arabus Arebus opulusque 
Write these words on cheese rynd, Juice leaves and give it either to a man or beast bitt by A madd dog\footnote{Wellcome MS 757, f.21v.}
\end{verbatim}

While Spinney’s charm for ‘Ache of the Lungs’ required the sufferer to wear a piece of paper containing a \textit{pater noster} and the words ‘Galgay. Galam. melcoy. talon. teta. meta. groton. deus. hoc’ for twenty-four hours before casting it into the fire, the charm from the ‘old book’ (designed to cure those that ‘wilt whoore’) involved taking blood from the sufferer’s calf and using it to write a formula in Latin and Hebrew.

With all these charms, but particularly with those of Goodwife Tynnes and Goodwife Sherrington (where there are differences in wording and where the latter lacks the opening formula that is present present in the former), it was words themselves, rather than their literal meaning, that were therapeutic.\footnote{On words and their magical power see Thomas, \textit{Religion and Decline}, pp.210-17, especially p.216 and Kieckhefer, pp.69-75.} Words, rather than merely indicating an object actually came to \textit{be} that object. This idea was part both of popular culture and a formal theory of language that had its roots in the writings of Plato and Aristotle.\footnote{Brian Vickers, ‘Analogy and Identity: the Rejection of Occult Symbolism 1580-1680’, in Brian Vickers (ed.), \textit{Occult and Scientific Mentalities in the Renaissance}, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp.95-163.} Eating or in some way placing a charm close to the body was the corporalisation of the word. Charms were sacred in a way that paralleled the Catholic mass (parts of which they often contained), the marked difference being that charms were apt to be vulgarised and were used by laymen as well as some members of the parochial clergy.
This was the medieval picture. It is colourful, and, as some historians have suggested, also applicable to many parts of late sixteenth and early seventeenth-century England where even in an overall climate of vigorous Protestant reforms, many older religious and magical beliefs continued to hold their ground. This said, beyond the existence of the charms themselves (important as they are as an indication that their author did not share the full weight of the reformers' iconoclasm), we have little to suggest that Henry Fowler actually believed in charms in the same way as his medieval predecessors had done. Alongside Tynnes' charm he simply wrote 'examined' and the date '1625' while noting at the bottom of the page that 'warne mylke' was also a cure. Likewise, he marked Spinney's charm with the comment, 'except for quartain ague' and two notes; the first stating that he had noticed this in 1634 when the daughter of William Burrow was ill, the second stating that he had also received news of this charm from a man living in Wiltshire.

Though we cannot discount the possibility that Fowler believed in the ability of charms to heal by supernatural means, there is no reason to assume that this was the case. Charms and healing words are accepted, but they are used with the hope and not the direct expectation of God's help. While he did mention the need to pray in his recipes (something common to both Protestants and Catholics of this period), his references to prayer relate most frequently to his recoveries from illness — 'this thing I prayse god did quickly cure me 1612'. Though Protestant reformers saw the Devil behind all forms of magic, it is possible that Fowler (in keeping with more moderate writers such as Richard Hooker and Bishop John Jewel) regarded medical charms as unorthodox yet unlikely to endanger his salvation. Unfortunately we have no ancillary writings with which this might be proved. Some of Fowler's contemporaries (most notably the Buckinghamshire clergyman Richard Napier) did appeal to the Church Fathers in order to justify their use of amulets, yet the only reference to these authors in Fowler's commonplace book is a small note under Spinney's entry for 'infectum pestilentis' or infections of the air, in which he affirms, on the authority of Epiphanius of Salamis (ca.

111 Wellcome MS 757, f.12r
112 Wellcome MS 757, f.105r
315 to ca. 402), that pestilence is caused by wicked spirits in the air.\textsuperscript{113} It is also possible that Fowler, in common with a small though significant number of churchmen, was a neo-Platonist, though again evidence is slim and inconclusive. The only reference we have is a note stating that man is a microcosm of the world (‘homo est microcosmus mundi’) – an opinion which, though used to justify correspondences between man and the earthly and heavenly spheres, was common at this time.\textsuperscript{114}

Fowler died in 1643 after his house and his family had been attacked by a parliamentarian mob – a common event in the violent period surrounding the fall of Gloucester to parliamentarian troops in 1643. What remained of his estate was confiscated in 1653. The fervently Royalist chronicle *Mercurius Rusticus* described the attack as follows,

> All smite him with tongue they rail at him, objecting against him heinous crimes, first that he read the common-prayers at length, and that he had published the King’s proclamation with a loud voice.\textsuperscript{115}

Fowler’s time as rector of Minchinhampton (1611 to 1643) had been marked by a series of conflicts with another clergyman, Anthony Lapthorne. Lapthorne attempted to be instituted on at least three occasions, in 1613, in 1618, and again in 1622. Finally, in May 1642 the House of Commons ordered that Fowler admit him as lecturer in Minchinhampton. Lapthorne was a zealous Calvinist who was said to have admonished James I for swearing during a game of bowls and to have rebuked Archbishop Abbot for standing by.\textsuperscript{116} Did he object to Fowler’s medical practice in the same way that James Hart had objected to Napier’s practice? We do not know.


'Epiphanius reporteth that that wicked Heretick manus affirmeth that this is A wicked spirit in the air called called messor which diffuses this contagion which is cause of all pestilences... messor spiritus maledictus aeris'

Epiphanius wrote a treatise against heresy. ‘Manus’ is perhaps Mani, one of the heretics mentioned. I am grateful to Prof. Nutton for this point.

\textsuperscript{114} Wellcome MS 757, f.58r; MacDonald, p.19

As this chapter has illustrated, commonplace books were one means by which educated laymen might record medical information. Though in theory they provided a strict method by which this might happen, in practice their use was far more eclectic. In contrast to those who kept commonplace books for the study of subjects such as theology and logic, keepers of these medical texts recorded information in a wayward manner so that their books came more to resemble notebooks than ordered commonplaces. Yet in doing so they have provided us with a fascinating insight into the way in which medical knowledge was constructed in the period prior to the English Civil War. They highlight the existence of pluralism both in the sort of therapeutics that people were willing to try and in their willingness to consult people from a wide range of different social backgrounds. This said, at the same time they illustrate the continued presence of far older patterns of social interaction that limited exchanges of information to family members or to those with whom a bond of trust had been established – parishioners or members of the local clergy. Though the rise of the commonplace book came about in part because of the greater dissemination of information through print and the importance attached to writing as a means of remembering that information, it was also linked to a desire to give permanence to oral communication.

Exchanges of medical information such as these were private insofar as their products, the commonplace books, were rarely published remaining instead within the tight social circle of their users. Yet from the 1630s until the late 1650s just this sort of information exchange – oral communication coupled with letters and the borrowing of manuscript and printed texts – formed the basis of a far more public-orientated project in which the commonplace book of Samuel Hartlib, an émigré from Elbing in Polish Prussia, was central to an attempt to achieve medical reform by collecting medical information, filtering it and then redistributing to those in need. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 3

The Hartlib Circle, the Ephemerides and Lay Medical Culture

The great means to come insensibly to a universal knowledge and experience is to keep diaries exactly of all whatever we hear or see by way of converse out of Books.

Samuel Hartlib 'Ephemerides 1648'

Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required; and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more.


Introduction

Hartlib's Ephemerides is a huge document which, with brief gaps between 1636 and 1638 and then again between 1644 and 1647, covers the best part of his active life from 1634 until 1660, two years short of his death in March 1662 at the age of sixty-two.\(^2\) It contains thousands of entries on religious, technological, agricultural, and medical matters. Religious, theological and ecclesiastical concerns dominated his writing in the 1630s, a decade in which Hartlib communicated with other Protestant 'Bretheren' who either lived in London as refugees from countries torn by religious persecution and the Thirty Years War, or those who were in the process of trying to escape from it. The number of entries on these matters decreases in the 1640s and '50s, perhaps as a consequence of the tenuous peace brought about by the Treaty of Westphalia, but also because Hartlib's aide de camp and fellow Protestant reformer, John Dury, had, at some point in the late 1640s set up an office, along the lines of Hartlib's existing 'Office of Address' to deal with them.\(^3\) From this point on, what medical information had been

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1 HP 31/22/10A
2 Mark Greengrass, 'Archive Refractions. Hartlib's Papers and the Workings of an Intelligencer', in Michael Hunter (ed.) Archives of the Scientific Revolution (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), p.44. Though the surviving manuscript begins in 1634, it is more than likely that Hartlib began the Ephemerides in 1631; \textit{ibid.}, p.40. Some pages may have been destroyed in 1657 when Hartlib's house in Charing Cross was badly damaged by fire.
3 Stephen Clucas, 'Samuel Hartlib's Ephemerides, 1633-59, and the Pursuit of Scientific and Philosophical Manuscripts: the Religious Ethos of an Intelligencer', The Seventeenth Century, 6,
recorded in the Ephemerides was augmented with material dealing with amongst other things, therapeutics, herbal, mineral and alchemical remedies, as well as an array of information relating to Helmontian, Paracelsian and neo-Platonic theories of disease and cure. Information came from Hartlib's extensive reading as well as the gleanings of others which had been posted to him at his house in Charing Cross, or relayed to him via word-of-mouth. It also contained jottings from scribal publications as well as snippets from rare and secret manuscripts which Hartlib and his friends had collected.

A substantial part of this material was used by Hartlib either to treat himself or to provide medical assistance for his family and friends. He treated a case of colic with a recipe which he had taken from Dury's commonplace book. The cures he borrowed from the wife of his friend and patron, the moderate Parliamentarian Sir Cheney Culpeper, provided him with relief from piles. Frederick Clodius, the alchemist who was later to become his son-in-law, recommended the pulverised and fried remains of a horse's hoof as a cure for the 'bloody flux', and another of his patrons, the former ambassador to Gustav Adolphus of Sweden Sir Thomas Roe, informed him that, 'A serpentia stone which is very usual in Germany is excellent also for the assuaging of the paines of the Gout.' Starshot, which was collected by herb women in February, had, according to Robert Boyle's sister Lady Ranelagh, proved to have been an excellent sympathetic remedy for swellings on the throat. Much in the same way as we have seen in the previous chapter, Hartlib used his commonplace book to record cures that had been tested or that he deemed fit for further testing. His text, like those of other godly Protestants and diary keepers, epitomises the value that he placed on reading and writing not only as a practical means to obtain knowledge, but also as a form of spiritual discipline.

1991, p.38; Dury, the son of a Scottish minister exiled in Germany, arrived in England in June 1641 at Hartlib's request.


5 OED – Obsolete word for material which was supposed to fall from the stars or to be the remains of a fallen star. Described by Boyle in Certain Physiological Essays, (1669), p.175, as 'that jelly that is sometimes found on the ground, and by the Vulgar call'd a star-shoot, as if it remain'd upon the extinction of a falling star.'

6 HP 28/2/26A 'Ephemerides 1651'. Clodius married Hartlib's daughter in 1653; HP 30/4/66B 'Ephemerides 1640'; HP 29/5/19A 'Ephemerides 1655'

7 Greengrass, 'Archive Refractions', p.44
This said, there are marked differences between Hartlib's approach and that seen previously. Not only was he at the centre of what may well have been one of the largest networks of information exchange to exist in the first half of the seventeenth century — in geographic terms alone it eventually ranged from Cromwellian Ireland and the Americas in the West to Moravia and Bohemia in the East — he also envisaged using his information in a way that was very different to the essentially private or vocational purposes of physicians, country clergymen and lay medical practitioners. Hartlib, along with many of his closest associates, aimed to achieve universal knowledge of God's creation — and, with it, a universal reformation of the church, the state, and medicine — by capturing in writing and in microcosm what was commonly known as the Book of Nature; that is the threefold relationship between God, man, and nature.

This chapter falls into four parts. The first part begins by examining the precedents behind this project. It investigates the opinions of Hartlib and his colleagues both towards the limits and the potential of human knowledge within the context of two defining aspects of man's existence — the Fall of Man and divine providence. It looks at Hartlib's attitude towards Bacon and Comenius, and in particular the emphasis that both authors (in common with a number of other English and Continental writers) placed on the skills and knowledge that God had given to all men and the gifts that he had placed within nature. The second part of the chapter moves on to look at the methods by which Hartlib hoped to collect that knowledge and in particular the appeal that he, along with other members of the Circle, made to Parliament and to the public for its free communication, both as a means of furthering universal knowledge and for the relief of the poor. In the case of medical knowledge, this appeal is placed against the background of a weakening in the formal medical establishment and the growth in popularity of many of the empirical and alchemical recipes that Hartlib and his friends were assembling. Along with the other sort of medical information that they amassed these are examined in further detail in the third part of the chapter. The fourth part of the chapter looks at the way in which this information was filtered by Hartlib and his associates. It focuses on the different moral and epistemological criteria that were applied to medical knowledge, and in particular on the distinction that was forged between the search for medical therapies and the search for a hermetic knowledge of the God's creation. Finally, comparisons are drawn between Hartlib's approach to medical knowledge and practice and his overall plans for the reform of society.
The Ephemerides and Pansophy

The influences on Hartlib's aims and the central role that the Ephemerides was to play in their achievement were many and varied. In general terms, as we have seen in the previous two chapters, the pursuit of learning was integral to the delicate balance that many Protestants attempted to maintain between faith and reason. Rather than seeing human reason as fundamentally at odds with God's reason the majority of Protestants preferred to define the limits of man's intellect within the context of their thinking on salvation. Learning was an example of godliness on the part of both the clergy and the laity, but, it could not ensure membership of the Elect.8

Though at its most extreme the study of classical texts was seen either as a paean to pagan authorities or, more frequently, as a poor substitute for religious experience, in practice many Calvinists took a moderate stance. As the English theologian and exile in Bremen William Ames noted, 'civill wisdom therefore considered in it selfe, is not opposed to spirituall wisdom, but only as a disparate.' Likewise, his opposition to the use of Latin, Greek and Hebrew phrases in preaching was met by the acknowledgement, common to many other Protestants, that clergymen required a detailed knowledge of both religious and secular matters if they were to minister to the common people.9 Ames' theological writings along with his work on Ramist logic (i.e. the writings of the sixteenth-century French logician and systematiser Petrus Ramus) had a deep effect on Hartlib both during his stay at Cambridge in the 1620s 10, when Ames' work, like that of many other Calvinist theologians, was filtering into the university, and in the 1630s when he collected his writings and manuscripts. It was to Ames that Hartlib turned in 1634 when he wanted to justify the breadth of his learning. As he noted in his Ephemerides, 'They are foolest that reject schoolmen... so Ames...had studied them mostly and would stil doe soe'. Though he looked for parallels in scripture wherever he

8 This summary is much indebted to John Morgan's Godly Learning, Puritan Attitudes towards Reason, Learning, and Education, 1560-1640, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986) especially Chapter 3. As I suggest below, there were many divergences between the view of English Calvinists and continental exiles such as Hartlib.
9 Quoted in Morgan, p.71; ibid, pp.139-40
10 Hartlib may have been attached to Emmanuel College. He never matriculated and he was never awarded a degree.
could find them, Hartlib believed that all authors, whether classical, 'Authentick', or 'schoolmen' could give him 'the discernings of truth'.

Hartlib's regard for the potential value of human learning went beyond the views held by many Protestants. In contrast to the emphasis placed on the vanity of learning by his friend, the learned sceptic Thomas Browne, Hartlib stressed both man's ability to restore the traduced knowledge 'which Adam did bring into the world through lust' and his potential to further that knowledge. As he noted in the Ephemerides in 1640,

There are exceeding few innatæ veritates etc. the rest came by infusion and teaching. It is true that the excellency of man is great but it is commonly mistaken. For it consists rather that not so much hee hase such seedes within him as that hee is Capable of all and furnished with the fittest ways to learne them. e.g. the 10 numbers on both his hands and so many toes, the combination of those numbers etc.

Learning and the communication of ideas were seen as pursuits that would lead to peace amongst Christians and other groups (most notably Jews) whom Hartlib wanted to integrate into what would become, if his millenarian aspirations were fulfilled, Christ's Kingdom on earth. The catastrophic wars which resulted from religious controversy and which were so pertinent to the lives of Hartlib and his contemporaries, would be ended by the systematic analysis of scripture and secular learning along lines suggested both by Ramist logicians at Cambridge and, as Howard Hotson has detailed, by a network of Continental contacts many of whom had been known to Hartlib and Dury prior to their arrival in England. As sophistry and obscurantism were replaced by useful, methodical, and practical means of obtaining encyclopaedic knowledge of God's creation, so too would man obtain a spirit of grace.

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12 HP 47/10/4A quoted in Clucas, 'Samuel Hartlib's Ephemerides', p.34; on this point see Webster, pp.18-19. Webster ignores Browne's learned scepticism in order to create a dichotomy between Stuart intellectuals and 'puritan' writers.
13 HP 30/4/59A 'Ephemerides 1640'
14 On this point see Richard H. Popkin, 'Hartlib, Dury and the Jews', in Mark Greengrass et al. (eds), Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation, pp.118-36
15 Howard Hotson, 'Philosophical Pedagogy in Reformed Central Europe between Ramus and Comenius: a Survey of the Continental Background of the 'Three Foreigners'' , in Mark Greengrass et al. (eds), Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation, pp.29-50.
16 Clucas, 'Samuel Hartlib's Ephemerides', pp.34-36
In common with many of his closest associates or 'intelligencers', Hartlib collected Bacon's manuscripts, peppering his own writings with excerpts from these and from Bacon's published works. While Bacon's *Advancement of Learning* (1605) and his *New Atlantis* (published in 1626, the year of his death) provided Hartlib both with a providential view of nature in which inquiry into nature's secrets was not forbidden and a model ('Solomon's House') for the advancement of the ' humane sciences'; it was Bacon's *Instauratio Magna* (1622) and his manuscripts which supplied him with a prophetic view of history based on the Book of Daniel. Daniel's prophecy that the rise of a great prince 'Michael' would lead to the resurrection of man and the increase of knowledge was first articulated by Bacon in his 'Valerius Terminus of the Interpretation of Nature' (a text which remained unpublished until 1784 and which was largely ignored by nineteenth-century commentators) and then in *Instauratio Magna*. For Hartlib this prophetic message was enforced by his reading the works of apocalyptic writers such as Joseph Mede (1586-1638) a Fellow at Christs College Cambridge, and J.H. Alsted (1588-1638); by his contact with Dury (who had interpreted the Apocalypse and calculated the number of the Beast), and by the political disruption of the late 1630s and early 1640s. Though Dury would later grow disillusioned with the 'breach between the King and Parliament' - Dury blaming it on the 'evill Counsellors who then were about the King' - at the beginning of the 1640s both he and Hartlib believed that (in the words of Hartlib) 'the tyme drawes neare that this Great desideratum all soe shall bee fulfilled for some noble ende which God's providence aymes at'.

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17 The term is first mentioned in the Ephemerides in 1654 (HP 29/4/4B). Like Sir Thomas Elyot, who coined the term in *The Governor* (1531), Hartlib saw 'intelligencers' as agents who would be paid by the state to collect information. On Hartlib's promotion of such agents see below and HP 29/5/10A 'Ephemerides 1655'.


20 Webster, pp.19-25.

21 Daniel 12:4; Webster, p.22.

22 Webster, p.9 and p.13. J.H. Alsted's, *Diatribe de Mille Annis Apocalyptici* and Mede's *Clavis Apocalyptica* were both published in 1627.
Chapter 3

Hartlib's belief in the imminence of change was also influenced by the Moravian exile Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius). Hartlib corresponded with Comenius, published translations of his works, found patronage for him when he came to England in 1641, and tried, albeit ultimately unsuccessfully, to persuade first the Long Parliament, and then a series of Independents, to adopt his plans for educational reform. Central to Comenius' reforming vision was the notion of *pan Sophia*. This, as Dagmar Capková points out, was not universal knowledge itself but the process by which man attempted to obtain that knowledge. The search for the three books of Nature (the world around us), God (the truth revealed in Scripture) and Man (the whole personality), was a means of integrating intellectual, moral and religious activities in a way that would promote tolerance in the face of violent conflict. By developing a universal language and a scheme for recording and relaying information men would be brought both closer together and, ultimately, closer to God and his 'Heavenly Jerusalem'.

In his *Linguarum Methodus Novissima*, a text published in the 1648 and noted by Hartlib, Comenius encouraged all those who wanted to be 'rationally engaged in life' to keep a 'vitae Ephemerides' - a diary in which they would record anything which they had read, heard, or meditated upon and which they thought to be of importance. It was only by searching all these 'registers', both past and present, and collating knowledge from books and from nature into a 'cleare and certaine order' of 'generall kinds and species' that men could hope to find the 'true Anatomy of the universe'. Comenius' writings were imbued both with a belief in the relationship between the microcosm and the macrocosm and with the language of divine revelation. Divine revelation was the source of the highest truths. It was infallible in a way that neither the senses (which were central

23 HP 29/9/1A John Dury 'Some Proposals Concerning the Happie Settlement of the Nation.' The directors of the Hartlib Project date this document to 'post 1645'; Hartlib to Baron John Robartes and Sir William Waller February 20th 1641 quoted in Webster, p.42
25 Dagmar Capková, 'Comenius and his Ideals: Escape from the Labyrinth' in Mark Greengrass et al. (eds), *Samuel Hartlib and Universal Reformation*, pp.77-79
26 Comenius took Revelation 21 and its description of a 'new Jerusalem' as his source. Along with Hartlib and Dury, his ideas for a Christian brotherhood were heavily influenced by the German Lutheran J.V. Andrae (1586-1654) and in particular his *Christianae Societatis Imago*, (Strasbourg, 1619).
27 Greengrass, 'Archive Refractions', p.44
to the educational programme mapped out in his *De Orbis Sensualium Pictus*\(^{29}\), nor human authorities, whether ancient, scholastic or humanist, could ever be. As Comenius remarked,

> it will be requisite not to trust to externall testimonies, and traditions, but to the inward truth of things themselves. For authorities may as easily cast false colours over things, as yield them any light or illustration; at least they doe distract the learner, and estrange his mind from the things unto themselves. But things unto themselves cannot make another manner of impression in the sense, then as indeed they are. And whensoever sense is deficient, there reason furnished with its certaine rules must also act its part, but when Reason is at a stand, we must have recourse unto Divine Revelation.\(^{30}\)

It was because he believed that 'the light of divine revelation [had been] granted to us all' that Comenius saw the potential for everyone – philosophers (whose abstracted notions made them unsuitable for government), physicians, historians, cosmographers, and mechanics alike, to participate in the 'one universall Science of Sciences, and Art of Arts, which is Pansophy.' As he noted,

> it is not likely, that any one alone, or some few men of an Age or two, have had the privilege to see all things, and others to see nothing, but as no soyle yeeld all kinds of fruits, and yet everyone yeelds something.

For every mothers child that comes into this world, is to be directed to the same end of Gods glory, and his owne eternal blisse: none ought to be excluded, neither man, nor woman, neither old man, nor child, neither noble nor ignoble, neither crafts-man nor ploughman, &c. For we are all off-spring of God.\(^{31}\)

'The more candles', as Comenius put it, 'the more light'.\(^{32}\) This was a view which fitted well with Bacon's opinion, as stated in *The Advancement of Learning*, that human learning should be extended so as to include the agricultural and the manual arts – activities which had hitherto been regarded as too 'familiar' or 'vulgar' to come within the scope of natural philosophy.\(^{33}\)

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\(^{29}\) The first English edition was published in 1659

\(^{30}\) Comenius, *A Reformation of the Schooles*, p.18

\(^{31}\) Comenius, *A Reformation of the Schooles*, p.30 and p.59

\(^{32}\) Comenius, *A Reformation of the Schooles*, p.28

Hartlib’s response to Comenius’ proposals was enthusiastic. He translated his pansophic writings from Latin (at that time the ‘universal’ language of intelligencers) into English, and published them, first without his permission, and then having gained it, as *A Reformation of the Schooles* (1642). Hartlib shared both Comenius’ belief in the availability of God’s general providence to all men and his emphasis on ‘common experience’ as a route to knowledge. As he exclaimed in a 1640 entry in the Ephemerides,

> It is a very hard matter to come once to know thoroughly that a thing is certain and true. Therefore we must labour principally in the Historical [and by that he meant *istoria* or the Greek for enquiry] part of all things...The more empirical the more scientifical and the more scientifical the more Heuretical knowledge.

There were points at which Hartlib departed from the opinions of both Bacon and Comenius. He described Bacon’s method as nothing ‘but a refined Quan’ Ludovicus Vives’ (no mean criticism) and noted that his medical material was full of ‘gross errors’. In Comenius’ case he observed that it was his ‘great fault’ to ‘strive too much for compendiousnes and brevity [in his encyclopaedic work]’ when ‘some things must of necessity bee handled at large’. He also criticised him for his belief that while man knows little or nothing, he at the same time possesses innate, God-given knowledge. Though Hartlib recognised a distinction between what he called ‘things within a Man’ and ‘things without’, it is difficult to tell which he actually favoured as a source of knowledge. While on the one hand he regarded the ‘study of those Notions which wee have and may find within ourselves’ as ‘very profitable’, on the other he believed that it would ‘never advance knowledge’. This in his opinion was a task that could only be achieved by looking at ‘Res extra Nos’ or things outside ourselves – a clue, perhaps, to the emphasis that he also laid on collecting information about the physical world.

‘Common stock where Truths are to bee gathered preserved et encreased’

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34 The original text was *Pansophiae Prodrumus*, (1637); Webster, p.110
35 HP 30/4/53B-30/4/56A ‘Ephemerides 1640’
36 HP 30/4/42A ‘Ephemerides 1640’; HP 27/2/27A ‘Ephemerides 1634’
37 HP 30/4/64B ‘Ephemerides 1640’
38 HP 30/4/59A ‘Ephemerides 1640’: ‘Comenius contradicts himself for in his didactic hee shows how little or nothing almost that man knows but then in his Metaphysica hee presupposes that hee hase so much in him etc.’
39 HP 30/4/48B ‘Ephemerides 1640’
40 HP 30/4/42A ‘Ephemerides 1640’
41 HP 29/2/28B ‘Ephemerides 1634’
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Though Hartlib was clearly influenced by the work of Bacon and Comenius, he was at the same time reluctant to ‘enslave’ himself ‘to any method or meditation’. In fact, as Stephen Clucas has detailed, Hartlib’s Ephemerides is littered with different schemes for the collection, organisation and utilisation of knowledge, many of which are either discarded, criticised, or in some way synthesised, so that the text itself comes to represent the eclecticism of his thinking and the diversity of his contacts.42

The languages of mercantilism and humanism often merged in the writings of Hartlib and his friends. The Herefordshire clergyman John Beale wrote to him in 1661 recommending that he divide his ‘sources of knowledge’ into ‘leading heads’. Though Beale had been exposed to the complexities of Ramist logic whilst at King’s College, Cambridge, and to the memory schemes of Caleb Morley (remaining an, albeit unsuccessful, advocate of their use until long after the Restoration) he nevertheless saw the importance of organising material in very practical terms.

What would a Grocer, Mercer, Salter or Apothecary doe, if (when the faire is at hand) his ware were all in a heape? And a house were overfurnished, yet the furniture soe disordered, that there could be noe rule by which one might guess where to find bedding, linnen, bellowes, snuffers &c, in this plenty there would bee a want of all things, till reduced to fit & convenient place.43

The organisation of knowledge (and in particular medical knowledge) both on paper and in the memory could be beneficial to everyone. As he noted, ‘by Memorative applications God hath oft-times made mee a preserver of other mens lives’ citing a case in which his ability to recall quickly one of Bacon’s surgical experiments had preserved the life of a wood-cutter who had struck his foot with an axe.44

Hartlib’s Ephemerides is organised like a merchant’s ledger or account book (see below figure 2). The main body of the text (the ‘receipts’) was entered in a linear fashion and is accompanied by marginal keywords which are there to assist reading, and perhaps,

42 Clucas, ‘In Search of ‘The True Logick’’, pp.52-3
memorisation. As we have seen in the previous chapter, a similar lay-out exists in the commonplace books of John Evelyn, Hartlib's friend from the 1650s on, and it is notable that both men were linked to mercantile culture; Evelyn through his family's trade in saltpetre and Hartlib through his many contacts with merchants in London and in northern Europe.

Figure 2. HP 28/2/14A Hartlib's Ephemerides 1651. The last entry refers to an Irish woman who claimed to possess a universal medicine.

There are also strong similarities between the text of the Ephemerides and that of an early printed book. Both were influenced by Ramist theory and an overriding desire to make knowledge accessible and understandable. On this point see Elizabeth Tebeaux, *The Emergence of a Tradition: Technical Writing in the English Renaissance*, (Amityville, New York: Baywood Publishing, 1997). Unfortunately Tebeaux does not deal with manuscript culture.

Unlike Evelyn's commonplace books which include an index to help with cross-referencing, no such text exists for Hartlib's work. Greengrass, 'Archive Refractions', p.47
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The Ephemerides was linked directly to the more extensive plans that Hartlib and Dury had for the collection and use of information. These were articulated in a series of tracts that were printed under Hartlib’s name and addressed to the Long Parliament, to successive Interregnum governments, and finally to the Protector himself. Many of these tracts combined a demand for religious restoration with the language of mercantilism and biblical or contractual law – a trend, which as David Zaret has detailed, was central to the notion of a ‘heavenly contract’ espoused by a number of more zealous Calvinist ministers in the forty or so years prior to the outbreak of the Civil War. Dury in his *Considerations Tending to the Happy Accomplishment of England’s Reformation of Church and State* (1647) stressed the importance of an all-inclusive ‘National Covenant’ according to which everyone would contribute ‘the gifts Spiritually and Temporally bestowed upon Us’ towards the establishment of the ‘Universall Kingdom of God in the World’. Following suggestions that had already been made both by Bacon in *New Atlantis* and by the husbandman and engineer Gabriel Platten in *Macaria* (1641), Dury advocated an ‘Office of Address for Communications’ which he described as,

...a certain place whereunto all Men might freely come to give Information of the Commodities which they have to be imparted unto others; and some body should bee set in that place to receive these Informations to the end that he may give address to every one that shall repaire to him, to make enquiry for such Commodities, where and how to find the same.

Information would be separated into three main areas ‘of Religion, of Learning, and of all Ingenuities, which are objects of Contemplation and delight unto the Mind, for their strangeness and usefulness unto the life of Man’, and stored in two registers; one ‘common and open to be lookt upon’, the other ‘secret and reserved for more speciall Use, containing the particular point of that Address, which is to be given to such as stand in need to be informed of it.’ The register books would in turn be divided up into ‘Alphabetical Tables of the Heads of Matters’. In the case of the ‘Humane sciences’

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48 Samuel Hartlib [John Dury] *Considerations Tending to the Happy Accomplishment of England’s Reformation of Church and State* (1647), pp.5-12
50 Dury, *Considerations Tending*, pp.43-44; Webster, p.69
(and here Dury pointed to ‘Lord Verulam’s Designations De Augmentis Scientiarum), a ‘warden’ would be appointed,

...to trade for the Advantages of Learning and Learned Men in Bookes, and Manuscripts to whom he may apply himselfe to become beneficial, that as Mind the end of their employment may reciprocate with him in the way of Communication.\(^\text{51}\)

While under normal circumstances the warden would give information only ‘to those thought fit’ (Dury did not specify whom this would include), an annual ‘account’ of all his negotiations would be given to the ‘Professors of all Sciences in both Universities’. The Office of Address would be maintained by ‘Publick Revenues’ – a term Dury used to indicate a mixture of donations, contributions, and 'proceeds from the Charity and zeal of Lovers of Religion'.\(^\text{52}\)

By 1649 Dury’s initial proposals had, thanks to texts by Hartlib and by William Petty, expanded to include plans for a state funded ‘Agency’ (the term then used to describe the Office of Address) and ‘Agent’\(^\text{53}\). Though the former was rejected when put before the Council of State in June 1649, the latter was accepted at this meeting. Hartlib was appointed ‘State Agent for Universal Learning’ and awarded an annual pension of £100, then a considerable sum and an indication of the parliamentary support that he and his friends had managed to garner.\(^\text{54}\) While a further attempt to obtain state funding was accepted in 1657 and some money was received in the form of debentures, the flow of money was slight and dried up altogether with the death of Cromwell in 1658.

The Office of Address combined a number of different functions pertinent to the plans of Hartlib and his friends for social and intellectual change. It was a means by which information could be collected and then put to practical use. It encouraged freedom of communication so as to make optimum use of the resources that God, in his beneficence, had provided. As Petty put it, ‘The wits and the endeavours of the world

\(^{51}\) Dury, Considerations Tending, p.49  
^{52}\) Dury, Considerations Tending, pp.50-52  
^{53}\) Webster, pp.70-71; Samuel Hartlib, A Further Discoverie of the Office of Publick Address for Accommodations (1649); William Petty, The Advice of W.P. to Mr S. Hartlib for the Advancement of Some Particular Parts of Learning (1648).  
^{54}\) This, however, was the only money that Hartlib received from the state; the rest of his income came from private patronage. On the financing of the Hartlib Circle in general see Mark Greengrass, The Financing of a Seventeenth-Century Intellectual: Contributions for Comenius, 1637-1641’, Acta Comeniana, 11, (1995), pp.71-157
may no longer be so many scattered coales or firebrands, which for want of union, are soone quenched, whereas being layed together they would have yeelded a comfortable light and heat.\textsuperscript{55} Similar to Hartlib's view of the Office of Address, Petty's scheme was, at its core, spiritual. In drawing men together, he, too, hoped to eliminate sectarian disputes and to bring men closer to God.

In Petty's opinion, spiritual aims would be best achieved through temporal actions. Prior to meeting Hartlib in 1646 and following a spell as Anatomy Reader at Oxford, he had, in 1643, gone to the Low Countries to study medicine at the universities of Utrecht, Amsterdam, and Leiden, matriculating from the latter in May 1644. He was particularly impressed with the system of clinical teaching advocated by the Huguenot immigrant Franciscus de le Boë at the hospital in Leiden and this, along with an attachment to older, Hippocratic ideas of empiricism, may have provided a stimulus for his suggestion, in his \textit{Advice} to Hartlib, that a \textit{Nosocomium Academicum} or teaching hospital be established both for the recovery of the poor and as a centre for the assessment of clinical data.\textsuperscript{56} Physicians working in conjunction with apothecaries and surgeons would 'collect a system of Physick and the most approved Medicinall Aphorisms; taking notice by the way of where those of Hippocrates are deficient or true, and by how many severall experiments he hath found them'.\textsuperscript{57}

Unfortunately at this point Petty did not go into detail and it is unclear from his text whether he hoped to augment 'experiments' (presumably the responses of patients who had been given medicines within the hospital) with information from other healers. This said, there are references within the Ephemerides which suggest that Petty was, in addition to his extensive work on agricultural, optical and mechanical inventions, looking for laymen with medical information. In 1649 he and the inventor Cressy Dymock are noted as having found a tradesman who had come across a way of 'Curing and Meliorating' tobacco so as to provide a remedy for melancholy.\textsuperscript{58} A year later he is recorded as having discovered 'widdow Champagnolla', who would disclose a universal

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\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{55} Petty, \textit{Advice of W.P. to Mr S. Hartlib}, p.2
  \item \textsuperscript{56} Petty, pp.8-9, Petty's scheme is discussed in Harold J. Cook, \textit{The Decline of the Old Medical Regime in Stuart London} (London and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986), pp.110-11 and Webster, pp.293-5. The Low Countries also provided a model for Petty's plans to put 'Theeves and Robbers' to labour. On this point see Petty, p.23
  \item \textsuperscript{57} Petty, p.12
  \item \textsuperscript{58} HP 28/1/13A 'Ephemerides 1649'
\end{itemize}

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language which could be used to record the names and virtues of plants and herbs – if only Petty would pay the hundred pounds she was asking for it.\(^5\)

The plans that Hartlib and Petty made for the relief of the poor were part of a wider set of proposals for social reform. In common with contemporary thinking, little distinction was made between sickness and poverty or deprivation. While these problems were commonly dealt with by the parish through the provision of out relief, Hartlib hoped to reduce the incidence of poverty itself by helping to provide each man and woman with work that was commensurate with their God-given abilities. In addition to its register of ‘Informations’ and ‘Commodities’, his Office of Address would also consist of a London-based ‘Office for Address of Accommodations’ which would serve as a form of labour exchange for those of ‘Age, Strength, and Ability’. Those involved in the ‘Vulgar Trades’ of husbandry, ‘manufactures’, and ‘merchandise’, would be brought into contact with those who needed their services; while those engaged in ‘Unlawfull & Unprofitable Way’ or ‘riot and vanity’ would be ‘rooted up and cast out of [the] fruitfull garden’.\(^6\)

Although this plan, with its explicit divide between the ‘industrious’ and the ‘idle’ and its attempt to reform the manners of the poor, bears some similarity to later Victorian proposals and their interpretation by Foucauldian historians, these similarities are, on the whole, misleading. Whereas Victorian workhouses, as embodied in the 1834 Poor Law, were designed to be places where people went as a last resort, Hartlib’s proposals were, along with those of Petty, Plittes and the Comptroller for the Sale of Crown Lands Henry Robinson, intended to provide a longer term solution in the form of artisanal and literary education for poor children.\(^6\) These schemes were acted on in London where Hartlib appears to have been a major force behind the foundation of the Corporation of the Poor between 1647 and 1649. The Corporation survived until the Restoration of the Stuarts in 1660, though for much of the 1650s it, like so many of the innovations that occurred during the Interregnum, suffered from a lack of money as the Common Council failed to raise additional rates from the wards and parishes. This said, it is notable that many of Hartlib’s proposals of 1647 were present both in the

\(^{5}\) HP 28/1/64B ‘Ephemerides 1650’. Seth Ward, who was also interested in universal languages, noted that Champagnolla’s secret was barely worth sixpence.

\(^{6}\) Dury, Considerations Tending, pp.22-3 and p.58

\(^{6}\) Webster, pp.362-69
establishment of Corporation of the Poor for Middlesex in 1662 and again at the end of
the seventeenth century, in the establishment of the Bristol Corporation.  

Evidence of reforms similar to those advocated by Hartlib and his friends can also be
seen in the Durham medical scheme of 1655. Details of this scheme survive in a single
pamphlet at the Bodleian Library and as part of a letter sent to Hartlib in 1658 by an
anonymous correspondent at the newly established university in Durham Castle.  
Believing that “Providence did require I should put forward the motion for the supply of
the Poore”, the Durham based Calvinist clergyman and medical practitioner George
Tonstall appealed to the local magistracy asking that they require all physicians to
“Register all mens cases as they were presented to them, freely writing the perticulers of
their Medicines” so that “both Patient and Physitian that comes after him, know better
how to proceed, when the next occasion is offered”.  
He anticipated that within three
years he would have collected enough “secrets” and consilia to be able to write a “Booke
of the Body of Physick”. This would then be used to produce small medical digests
containing prescriptions which would be given free of charge to the laity so that they
could treat themselves, the intention being that they in turn would provide him with
clinical descriptions with which to further his own empirical investigations. This form of
self-help would be reinforced by a team of two physicians (“to give advice”) and three
surgeons or apothecaries to “attend and administer it”.  
It would be paid for by the
parishes or, failing that, by gentry, clergy and parish officers who, out of Christian
charity, would provide finances on an annual basis and recommend patients for
treatment.

Tonstall’s scheme failed for practical reasons. The magistrates of the Durham Quarter
Sessions thought that the scheme lay outside the scope of existing legislation so they

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62 Paul Slack, Poverty and Policy in Tudor and Stuart England, (London and New York: Longman,
1988), pp.154-5 and p.196; and idem, ‘Hospitals, Workhouses and the Relief of the Poor in
Early Modern London’, in Ole Peter Grell and Andrew Cunningham (eds), Health Care and Poor
Relief in Protestant Europe 1500-1700, (London and New York: Routledge, 1997), pp.241-42
63 David Harley, ‘Pious Physic for the Poor: the Lost Durham County Medical Scheme of
College, Septemb. 4. 1658’. Bodleian Library Antiqu.e.E.42 (7) is transcribed at the end of
Harley’s article.
64 Tonstall quoted in Harley, ‘Pious physic’, p.152 and p.155. Tonstall (b.1617) had intended to
become a clergyman but turned instead to practising medicine on the outbreak of the Civil War.
He obtained an Oxford M.B. in 1647.
65 Harley, ‘Pious Physic’, pp.155-56
refused to recommend it to the parishes. Even if the scheme had been passed to the
parishes, it is unlikely that they would have had either the political will or the finances
with which to enact it. It is also unlikely that learned physicians, already offended by the
way in which Tonstall had blurred their function and status with that of apothecaries and
surgeons, would have been willing to give up their lucrative therapies to those who
would apply them without consideration for the rules of rational physic. Though some
learned physicians did treat the poor for free (as is shown in the account books of
Tonstall's later rival Martin Lister), it is quite possible that this was one form of godly
charity which they (in contrast to some later, eighteenth-century physicians) were
unwilling to modify so as to include the doctrine of self-help.

Both Tonstall's proposals and the objections levelled against them could be justified
within a framework of Protestant theology and within what were differing, and at times
inconsistent, notions of Christian charity and duty. While Tonstall could and did appeal
against the 'Selfe-love and Covetousnesse' of physicians in failing to surrender their
knowledge in the service of the sick poor, physicians might just as easily point out that
charity was a paternalistic activity that was best administered by those whose vocation it
was to do so. It is difficulties such as these - along with the mirroring of many of the
reform schemes that historians have labelled, in Catholic France and in the Italian city
states - that make any general link between social change and a particular theological
code (be it Catholicism, Lutheranism, or the more rigorous 'Puritan' form of
Calvinism), hard to sustain. This said, it is evident that individuals were, each in their
own unique way, influenced by religious considerations which should not be ignored.

An appeal for the free dissemination of therapeutic knowledge was also made by Robert
Boyle in his 'Epistolical Discourse of Philaretus to Empericus' which was published
anonymously in 1655 as one of several Chemical, Medicinal, and Chyrurgical Addresses Made

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66 Harley, 'Pious Physic', p.157
67 Harley, 'Pious Physic', p.150. Lister sided against Tonstall in his debate with Dr Robert
Wittie over the medicinal value of the waters at Scarborough spa; Bodleian MS Lister 30 and
32*. Lister kept a record of his patients and their fees on the blank pages of his almanacs.
68 I am referring here to the attempts of Webster (following R.K. Merton and Max Weber) to
classify Interregnum science as 'Puritan'. Harley, 'Pious Physic', p.157, notes that Tonstall's
proposals, whilst presented in terms of religious duty and practical help, made no reference to
millenarianism. Slack, 'Hospitals, Workhouses and the Relief of the Poor', pp.234-35, points
both to the temporal nature of much of the charity available in late medieval London and to the
emphasis on civic obligation that already existed prior to the Reformation. See also my review of
to Samuel Hartlib Esquire — Boyle having been friends with Hartlib since 1646 when he 
was introduced to him by his sister Lady Ranelagh.\(^{69}\) Boyle's text can be seen to operate 
on a number of different levels. While at its most immediate it is on the one hand an 
attack on the avarice of medical practitioners who kept their recipes secret (or asked high 
prices for them) and a demand for the extension of Christian charity to include actual 
medical treatment (rather than just giving beggars shelter and scraps). On the other hand 
it may be taken as a more general attack on members of his own social group who 
collected and hoarded secrets rather than devoting their time to more practical 
purposes.\(^{70}\) Likewise, (and as the full title of his work suggests) Boyle's appeal to the 
'Vertue' of his readers needs to be read in conjunction with his opinion of himself as a 
'Person of singular piety, Honour, and Learning'. Though clearly influenced by what, 
from the end of the 1640s, was a growing interest in the area of medical therapeutics, 
Boyle's text was also the work of a man who, from his earliest years, had devoted long 
periods of time to the inspection of his own character, and for whom the moral and 
ethical dilemmas, including those surrounding the diffusion of medical information, 
would remain.\(^{71}\) In this sense the 'Epistolical Discourse' is notable both for its dialogue 
form (later in life Boyle would discuss casuistry with spiritual confidants), and for the 
use of the name 'Philaretus' — Boyle having also used this name in an earlier, 
autobiographical sketch, 'An account of Philaretus during his minority'.\(^{72}\)

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\(^{70}\) Anon. [Robert Boyle], 'An Epistolical Discourse of Philaretus to Empericus Written by a Person of Singular Piety, Honour, and Learning, Inviting All True Lovers of Vertue and Mankind, to a Free and Generous Communication of their Secrets and Receits in Physick', pp.134-6. Boyle suggested that practitioners should sell their medical secrets 'upon reasonable terms'; Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature*, p.331; in HP 28/1/32B 'Ephemerides 1649', Hartlib noted Boyle's distaste at expensive cabinets of curiosities - 'That which makes Chambers of Rarity so costly is the precious gold silver - etc. medals of several kinds, but they are not so much to bee regarded in reference to Teaching as those other Natural and Mechanical Collections. Mr Boyle.'


\(^{72}\) The literature on Boyle is, thanks in part to the complexities of his character, his place in the historiography of early modern science and the ongoing attempts to publish his work, huge. The assessment given above is perhaps most influenced by Michael Hunter, 'The Conscience of Robert Boyle: Functionalism, Dysfunctionalism', and the Task of Historical Understanding' in J.V. Field and F.A.J.L. James (eds) *Renaissance and Revolution: Humanists, Scholars, Craftsmen, and Natural Philosophers in Early Modern Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994),
As Michael Hunter has suggested, the period during which Boyle was working on his ‘Epistolical Discourse’ (sometime between 1647 and 1648) in many ways represents a turning point in his life. This was the point at which his activities, though still based around moral concerns, were increasingly dominated by laboratory experiments (he set up a laboratory at his Stalbridge estate in Dorset), by his reading of J.B. van Helmont’s work, and by his contact with other natural philosophers and alchemists.\(^5\)

Though Hunter plays down any influence that the Hartlib Circle may have had on Boyle in the 1650s (he notes instead Boyle’s acquaintance with the natural philosopher Nathaniel Highmore), it seems clear that, when viewed the other way round, from Hartlib’s perspective, Boyle continued to be seen by him as a valued source of information, contacts, and opinions.\(^7\) Likewise Hartlib, if not a direct influence on Boyle, certainly was someone in whom Boyle could confide his early enthusiasm for chemical experiments and medicines.\(^7\)

Hartlib’s Ephemerides contains many references to Boyle, to his medical trials and to the recipes that Boyle sought to buy from empirics, alchemists, distillers, artisans, and other unlicensed practitioners. These (as perhaps befits a day-book) are presented in the form of news. We learn that in 1649 Boyle, through his contacts with Countess Bristow (possibly a friend of Lady Ranelagh’s) was due to receive the recipe for an ointment against strains by which, according to Hartlib, ‘shee hath done wonderful cures’.\(^7\)

Two years later in 1651, Boyle was in contact with George Starkey (Starkey having travelled from Harvard to London the previous year) and was quickly exchanging Helmontian recipes with the Bermuda born alchemist. Though one of these recipes (‘a Balsam of

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\(^7\) Hunter, ‘How Boyle Became a Scientist’, pp.82-3; *ibid.*, p.91. Hunter notes that Boyle was similarly open to contact with those that others shunned as “enthusiasts”. An argument for very close connections between the Hartlib Circle and Boyle is made by Barbara Beigun Kaplan in, “Divulging of Useful Truths in Physick”: The Medical Agenda of Robert Boyle, (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), especially pp.16-24

\(^7\) Hunter, ‘How Boyle Became a Scientist’, p.66. Boyle wrote to Hartlib in 1649 describing how ‘Vulcan’ (that is, the god of fire) had ‘transported’ and ‘bewitched’ him. The distance between Boyle and Hartlib may have been physical as much as anything else, with Boyle moving to Oxford late in 1655 or early in 1656.

\(^7\) HP 28/1/33B ‘Ephemerides 1649’
Vegetables') was passed on to Hartlib in 1652, there is no other reference to it and it is merely recorded along with other purges and recipes for the stone.\(^7^7\)

While Hartlib was undoubtedly able to appreciate and understand the recipes that he received, to the extent that he tried a number of them out, there is a sense in which he considered himself to be the recipient of the work of others. There is, for example, no indication that he, though associated with a number of iatrochemists and a publisher of their works, was directly involved with the actual process of laboratory testing. Hartlib's own brand of Baconian induction came largely second-hand, from his close connections with men such as Boyle, Clodius, and Benjamin Worsley, who did have some access to laboratories (Clodius' being located in what had once been the back kitchen of Hartlib's house), and from the claims of those who sent him their recipes.\(^7^8\) Many of these claims, including those that used the word 'experientia' or dealt with 'chymistry' (an area linked directly to experiments and Baconianism by some historians), were derived from books and manuscripts.\(^7^9\) Hartlib's Ephemerides entries (like many of those in the commonplace books we looked at in the previous chapter) are in a form of shorthand. Few procedural details are given beyond a note stating that someone else had them, or was soon to obtain them. In this respect we might say that Hartlib's Ephemerides is representative both of the trust that he placed in his friends and family as custodians of knowledge, and of his willingness to defer to the work of others.

Collecting medical information from laymen

As we have seen in the previous chapter, laymen living in the first half of the seventeenth century acquired or formulated for themselves a diverse range of medical


\(^{78}\) See for example HP 29/4/21B 'Ephemerides 1654', 'To Mr Boyle was imparted the Processe of Mercury which may prove a very luciferous Experiment, after it is prepared for health.'; Webster, p.385, notes that Clodius was heavily involved with a 'Chemical College' near Hartlib's house and had access to five furnaces. In HP 28/1/27B 'Ephemerides 1649', Hartlib noted that his friend Dr Jonathan Goddard intended 'to perfect himself and those studies that tend to the perfection of Medicina and Chymistry in a true Experimental Way for which purpose hee is about erecting of an excellent Laboratorie'.

\(^{79}\) Webster, p.385. For the continued connections between 'chymistry' and book learning see Stephen Clucas, 'The Correspondence of a XVII-Century 'Chymicall Gentleman': Sir Cheney Culpeper and the Chemical Interests of the Hartlib Circle.', *Ambix*, Vol. 40, (November 1993), No.3, pp.147-70
information which was used either to treat family and friends, or sold in the form of advice or as proprietary remedies and cures. These were features of contemporary medical culture that physicians, along with others who claimed to have a monopoly on the practice of medicine or the custodianship of knowledge, could do little to eradicate either before the civil wars (when those physicians represented by the College of Physicians had had a comparatively good relationship with the monarchy), or during the civil wars and the Protectorate. Thanks to the collapse of press censorship at the end of 1640 and to the persistence of existing patterns of information exchange (word of mouth contact, letters and manuscripts), medical knowledge continued to flow and irregular healers such as James Leveret (an old gardener who cured by touch) and Mrs Isabella Larimore (a surgeon) continued to evade the medical authorities. Their activities appeared, often without censure, in the pages of Hartlib’s Ephemerides.80

As Harold Cook has detailed, this situation remained even after 1656 when a number of Cromwellians (some of whom were associates of Hartlib’s) gained control of the College of Physicians and attempted to clamp down on empirics who (in their opinion) were masquerading as physicians. Their moves were in turn supported by such iatrochemists as William Rand (also a contact of Hartlib’s) who, though neither licensed nor members of the College of Physicians, nevertheless wanted to establish a ‘College of Graduate Physicians’ which would restrict the activities of ‘mechanics and wicked persons, as without education, [who] thrust themselves upon the practice thereof.’81 This is of significance not least because it illustrates how many of those who, after the Restoration, were regarded as radicals and rabble-rousers, did, in their own time, manage to combine radicalism towards an ailing Galenic hierarchy with conservatism towards those who they themselves regarded as vulgar and unskilled.

80 HP 30/4/71B ‘Ephemerides 1641’ – ‘One Leveret a plaine Country-Man now dwelling at Celsy the [younge?] sonne seems to have the gift of healing. Hee hase done the most strangest cures of the Goute, Sciatica, Feavers, kings evil etc. as ever hase beene heard. Hee dose all by stroking of hands and saying few prayer-like words the Lord take away his wrath from thee.’ Hartlib heard about Leveret from Sir Thomas Roe. HP 30/4/87B ‘Ephemerides 1643’. On Leveret and Larimore see Cook, The Decline of the Old Medical Regime, p.87 and p.104. I am grateful to Margaret Pelling of Oxford University for looking up the names of irregular healers mentioned in the Ephemerides in her database of cases brought before the College of Physicians. A man by the name of ‘Larymore’ was summoned by the College in December 1630 for selling medicines.

81 Cook, pp.125-32; William Rand quoted in ibid., p.129. Rand possessed a Leiden MD that had not been incorporated at Oxford or Cambridge.
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While Hartlib shared some of Rand's reservations about elevating the status of artisans, craftsmen and empirics to that of physicians, he was at the same time interested in obtaining whatever knowledge he could from them and from other suppliers of materia medica. Hartlib was joined in this view by his friend and patron Sir Cheney Culpeper who noted that he, out of a belief that God had given talent to all, was willing to 'religiously condescend to things and men of lowe degree, at least so far as to examine and knowe them.' In Culpeper's case this involved consulting local apothecaries (one of whom provided him with a 'powder for women in chylebed') and Kentish woad men, the latter being also involved in his plans for agricultural reform.82

Just as apothecaries had traditionally supplied physicians with materia medica, so too might laymen serve as suppliers of medical knowledge without being raised to the status of learned physicians. Perhaps in reference to Petty's plan for a botanical garden at his Nosocomium Academicum, Hartlib recorded how 'Mr Goodyeare at Peters-field in Sussex 40 miles from London' was,

no Dr but only Practisioner of Physick, absolutely the chiefest Botanicus in all England or Europe in Mr [Elias] Ashmoales judgment. Hee hath an excellent Garden and all kind of Exotick Plants whatsoever. Amongst other Mr Ashmoale (who is very wel acquainted with him) related an Irish Plant which he hath, which doth purge when ones weares it in ones pocket.83

The Irish, of whom Hartlib remarked rather naively (but perhaps in connection with the commonly held idea that God, at the creation, had provided each nation with its own medicines84), 'that they have] no Physicians nor Chirurgians knowing a perfect cure of all diseases by their simples etc. that are found amongst themselves, might also provide him with information. To this end he made enquiries among his Anglo-Irish contacts (two of whom, Gerard and Arnold Boate, were compiling a natural history of Ireland) noting again, how one 'Kertcher an Irish Gentleman' and a friend of Lord Monmouth had,

82 Culpeper to Hartlib October 1st 1646 in M.J. Braddick and Mark Greengrass (eds), The Letters of Sir Cheney Culpeper (1641-1657), p.280; Culpeper to Hartlib February 23rd 1643 in ibid., p.130. Culpeper eventually fell out with his 'Woade man' complaining that 'instead of teaching me his arte he has cheated me of my money.'


84 This view was most common among English Calvinists. See for example John Parkinson, Paradisi in Sole: Paradisus Terrestris (1629). It was also used (though not by Hartlib) as part of an attack on expensive foreign drugs. For an example of this see William Harrison, The Description of England (1587), Book 20 'Gardens and Orchards'.
again with a herb that worked by the power of sympathy, treated Lady Ranelagh for toothache.®

Laymen might also know of sources of minerals, springs and waters which, as cures for urinary complaints such as 'the stone' and 'the gravel', were of growing importance during the course of the seventeenth century. As Hartlib noted in 1649,

Birch-water is very hard to come by for any quantities. Yet there is an old man who makes it his work or living to get or procure what can be gotten of it. The physicians are very chary and sparing of this Water it being so hard to come by. But Mr Parsons lighted upon the forenamed Man accidentally, whom he well rewarded... Hee got many quarts of it and drinks every morning neere half or a whole pint... which hee finds the best medicine for ease in his stone in the bladder of all that ever hee hath vsed.®

While Hartlib was delighted by this find and by the successful tests performed on it by his friend Mr Parsons (he added later that the water was very good for the face and was 'much used by ladies'), it also seems clear that the old man, far from being a passive recipient of God's providence, was also aware of its medical and monetary value.® Such an awareness might come from printed books or advertisements, or, as was more often the case, from the spoken publicity created by news of a successful cure. In contrast to some of Hartlib's more gentlemanly contacts, laymen had few qualms about entering the medical marketplace with their cures. Hartlib noted for example how Woodart, a gouty and 'altogether illiterate' Billingsgate tar-seller, bought a cheap medical book on the condition that the 'booke-woman' read out to him a recipe for an ointment which would cure his affliction. Having successfully tried it he then sold the ointment (but not the recipe) to others, including a patient of Hartlib's friend, the Irish physician Robert Child.® Likewise it is clear that, like Hartlib himself, some laymen saw their secrets as commodities that could be traded for others. This was the case with a merchant who promised to exchange his universal 'Ophtalmical [sic] secret' if Clodius would give him his 'elixir proprietatis' for turning 'Canary-sack' (a white wine) into muscadine wine.®

® HP 28/1/2A 'Ephemerides 1649'. Like Goodyear, Kercher had a sympathetic herb that cured when worn in one's pocket.
® HP 28/1/17B 'Ephemerides 1649'
® HP 28/1/19A 'Ephemerides 1649'
® HP 28/1/61A 'Ephemerides 1649'. Hartlib thought Woodart's 'secret' was 'a very slight thing', but recorded it anyway.
® HP 29/4/28B 'Ephemerides 1654'
Hartlib was receptive to gossip, particularly when it was of an exotic nature. He wrote enthusiastically of 'Adrien de Briers...Mr Smiths great Chymist and Mechanical Man', who, as an operator at the Hapsburg court in Vienna, had learned from other operators how to make a 'Powder of Antimony' which would 'strangely' cure fevers and madness. De Briers had offered, without success, to give the powder to the King of Denmark in return for a cancellation of his debts. Likewise, in the same year, he recorded the epic tale of a gentleman who suffered from haemorrhoids who, after travelling 'all Countries over to finde a Remedy' and 'having spent all his meanes', finally learned from a Frenchman that 'millipedes stamp't and boyled in butter and applied' was 'one of the most soveraigne Medecins' for his complaint. Finally, and also from the Continent, Hartlib received news of 'Dr Spark a German Country Physician' who by 'by continual wearing vpon his brest a wilde-cats-skinne', (and at this juncture Hartlib noted 'the catskins may bee perfumed'), had been 'preserved from death' and alleviated of an ill stomach, colic and 'windinesses'. If that was unsuccessful, then, on the basis of advice received from Theodore Mayerne, Hartlib suggested that the sufferer wear a 'stomaker' made from white paper coated with nutmeg or best 'salat-oile', adding 'this is one of Dr Mayerne's Preservatives which himself weares'. Hartlib was clearly open to the rhetorical language that was used in the medical marketplace and in the recipe books which he borrowed and skimmed for useful information, and his entries abound with news of 'professed', 'sovereign', and 'approved' remedies, as well as claims for panaceas and universal medicines.

The latter affords a particular case, as, whilst quacks and secret-sellers (and the very high prices demanded by some of those mentioned in the Ephemerides suggests that they fall into these categories), frequently, and often in the face of ridicule, claimed that their remedies and secrets cured everything, Hartlib believed that, with spiritual renewal, universal remedies were possible. This can, for example, be seen in a letter he wrote to the physician and governor of Connecticut John Winthrop in 1660, in which he (in reference to Plattes' Macaria and its plans for an improved 'Art of Physick') stated his

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90 HP 29/6/7A and HP 29/6/13B ‘Ephemerides 1657’
91 HP 28/1/52B ‘Ephemerides 1649’
92 HP 28/1/55A ‘Ephemerides 1649’
93 See for example HP 28/2/5A ‘Ephemerides 1651’. Hartlib’s ‘Cozen Freher’ wrote to him of ‘Aurum Potabile madf by one of Geneva, of which hee hath a description both in French and Latin in print. Himself hath vsed it with great successse, and the Practitioner hath preserved himself by it from all gray-haire and his wife and other sicknesses.’
94 Webster, p.246
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belief that he was about to become 'not onely a true possessor, but a real dispenser of
these mysteries.'^ Hartlib's belief in the possibility of a philosopher's stone was shared
by, amongst others, John Winthrop's father, who believed that its secrets might be
revealed in a divinely sanctioned dream, and Boyle, who, though he thought that it
would be a gift from God, feared (as was common with godly Protestants) that its use
might also be associated with the Devil.96

On the other hand, there were those among Hartlib's contacts who rejected the
philosopher's stone, and other forms of elixir such as the 'alkahest' or universal solvent,
either because they believed that God would never reveal such secrets to man or because
they saw claims as posturing on the part of alchemists. God, as John Evelyn noted in
his commonplace book beside a supposed recipe for the stone, '[is] the only revealer of
this art.'97 Further evidence that Evelyn—who possessed an 'elabatory' at his house at
Sayes Court and who, during the 1650s, studied under two French alchemists (Annibal
Bartlet and Nicholas Le Fèvre)—questioned the claims of alchemists, has come to light
in a manuscript, 'Coelem sanitatis or, a Particular of the Vegetable & Animal
Dissolvant', that was purchased recently by the British Library. At the end of the text,
which Evelyn had translated into English but which originally circulated in French as a
low volume scribal production, and deals with a journey into the home of an alchemist
that finally culminates in the discovery of an elixir, Evelyn remarked, 'This is after all
our Philosopher's Boast, but a well rectified spirit of wine.'98

On a more a limited scale, chemical remedies were, both in terms of their efficiency and
cost (as simples they were far cheaper than the composite drugs hawked by some
Galenists), regarded as a promising way of curing diseases amongst the poor. One such
remedy was ens veneris, a copper compound on which Boyle worked with Starkey late in
1651. Both Boyle and Hartlib had high hopes for ens veneris, the latter noting in his
Ephemerides in 1653 that, though the drug 'wil not cure chronical diseases [it] is very
excellent for many other diseases as agues, feavers headache french pox etc etc and is
Medicina Pauperum because for 5 shillings so much may be prepared with it as may

95 Hartlib to Winthrop March 16th 1660. Quoted in Newman, Gehenical Fire, p.56
96 Newman, p.65. On Boyle and alchemy see Michael Hunter, 'Alchemy, Magic and Moralism
97 Evelyn MS 54(1), p.278
98 BL Evelyn MS JD 12, unpaginated. I am grateful to Dr Frances Harris of the British Library
for bringing this text to my attention.
serve 100 Poore People’. Unfortunately (or perhaps fortunately, given the ill effects that Starkey’s work had on his own health) the drug was never distributed in this way, both because Starkey, in common with many other alchemists, did not want to have his ‘secret’ vulgarised (he believed that its diffusion would reduce the likelihood of his having divinely sanctioned revelations), and because he wanted to make money out of it.

From Germany came the suggestion that hangmen and Scharfrichter or executioners could provide ‘abundance of real knowledge... for advancement of experimental Philosophy, Chirurgery and Medecina’; and Hartlib listed a number of what he termed ‘rare receipts’ for the cure of ‘Stinking Breaths’ many of which involved moss from the skull of a dead man, mummified, or other body parts. These entries are of interest as they illustrate the way in which Hartlib’s literary activities elided with the snippets of popular culture that he heard about and recorded in the Ephemerides. As R.J. Evans has noted, from the sixteenth century onwards, German town Scharfrichter were making large sums by combining their existing jobs of executioner and town knacker with that of the supplier of materia medica. This grisly practice played heavily on the liminal position that such people occupied as mediators between life and death as well as societal preconceptions about the properties of blood (for example as a cure for epilepsy) and mumia - themselves a melange of religious, medical and popular ideas.

Whilst Hartlib may have been aware of this, it is also clear from the marginal entries in the Ephemerides that he derived a lot of his information about it from his reading of the sixteenth-century authors Cornelius Agrippa and Paracelsus – the latter having come to Hartlib’s attention through the work of his later follower Andreas Tentzelius (fl.1625). Both authors were key exponents of the doctrine of cure by sympathy which centred

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99 HP 28/2/72B ‘Ephemerides 1653’. Boyle’s name is given as one of the marginal keywords alongside the entry.

100 Starkey’s outlook, along with his relationship with Boyle, is described in detail in Newman, pp.71-91

101 HP 31/22/19A ‘Ephemerides 1648’


103 Andreas Tentzelius, Medicina Diastatica; Hoe Est, Singularis illa et Admirabilis ad Distans, & Beneficio Mumialis Transplantationis, (Jehnae: Sumtibus Johannis Birckneri, 1629). An English translation by Ferdinando Pankhurst, Medicina Diastatica, or, Sympathetick Mumie: Containing, Many Mysterious and Hidden Secrets in Philosophy and Physick, was published in 1653, five years after Hartlib made his entry.
around the idea of hidden correspondences between man, God, and nature, a belief which reached its peak in England during the 1640s and 1650s — perhaps most notably, in terms of its wider circulation, in the work of Hartlib’s friend Kenelm Digby.\(^\text{104}\) Examples such as this indicate that Hartlib was looking for cases from lay medical practice to substantiate what he had read about elsewhere as, despite their gruesome nature, they could provide evidence for God’s omnipotence and mysteriousness — the latter also constituting a facet of the neo-Platonic occultism that Hartlib and a number of his friends espoused. As John Beale, having also read Tentzelius’ work, commented in a letter to Hartlib, ‘the Allwise God hath hidden his greatest workes from the eyes of our Reasone, That wee in this piligrimage might learne to depend on him more by fayth, than on ourselves by the presumption of knoweledge’\(^\text{105}\).

**Filtering information**

Hartlib was, for all his openness, anxious about being gullied or duped by those who supplied him with information. His concerns can be seen both in the notes that he took from literary works — he recorded, for example, Henry Peacham’s opinion of Italian snake handlers as mountebanks (a view also popularised by Thomas Browne) — and in his attempts to gauge the reliability of his sources.\(^\text{106}\) The latter was particularly important to Hartlib because, as we have seen above, much of the empirical data that he received was by hearsay and, prior to being tested (a process for which there does not seem to have been any formal procedure), could only be judged by looking at the reputation and character of the source and by comparing his or her data with what was already known about the subject. Though it might be said that ‘credit’ (to use a term favoured by Steven Shapin) was already established by the act of recording information in the Ephemerides, it is nevertheless interesting to try and establish which criteria were emphasised as information was entered into the commonplace book.\(^\text{107}\) It is likewise...

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\(^{104}\) See for example Kenelm Digby, *Touching the Cure of Wounds by the Powder of Sympathy*, (1658)

\(^{105}\) HP 51/29A-31B. Beale to Hartlib 15th October 1658. Beale cited the English translation of Tentzelius’ work.


interesting, though for lack of evidence more difficult, to look at the reasons why information might be rejected.

Much of the language that Hartlib utilised in his assessment of information was common to genteel and godly society. While credibility might be established by appealing to the social position of his sources, far more emphasis was placed on moral considerations and on whether or not the individual or individuals concerned behaved in a manner that was commensurate with their station. Hartlib noted for example how 'Mr Richard Care of a thousand lib. per Annum' was 'an excellent experienced et much observing Gentleman in Cornwall... A man excellent for conversing cum Rusticus et Mechanicis', but cautioned that his wife was 'very Covetous' and therefore liable to impinge upon her husband's affable and public-spirited character. Conversely, 'Mr Clegget', a poor tailor living in Fetter-lane, whose cure for the stone (he used tanner's 'woose') reached Hartlib's attention thanks to the physician Jonathan Goddard, was though by Hartlib to be pious and 'not mercenary'. Though on the whole such accolades are quite rare in the Ephemerides, it should be noted that in contrast with commentators such as Bacon, Hartlib and Dury did not regard trade as intrinsically base and deceitful. Though, through patronage and friendship, they had links with the gentlemanly culture which Shapin sees as central to the formation of credit, they were also engaged with mercantile culture (there is for example evidence that in 1650 Dury, on the advice of Benjamin Worsley, considered teaching his wife to distil 'choice waters and spirits from spices and herbs' so that they could be marketed in order to support his activities), and, like Boyle, were willing to purchase recipes. They were on the other hand opposed to those individuals who hoarded their recipes or who demanded high prices for them – the former being a category that included gentlemen as well as merchants.

Gender also played a role in Hartlib's evaluation of medical information. During the 1640s and '50s, aristocratic women such as Lady Ranelagh and Lady Barrington played a

Renaudot's *Bureau d'Adresse*, and its use of 'social evidence' in the assessment of material dealing with the occult.

108 HP 29/2/22A 'Ephemerides 1634'

109 Described by Hartlib as a 'liqour'. *OED* describes 'wooze' as a form of ooze, signifying perhaps an oozing substance.

110 HP 29/8/1A-B 'Ephemerides 1659'. Hartlib noted, with some mirth, that one woman was so grateful for Clegett's cure that she married him.
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prominent role amongst Hartlib’s circle of friends, though it is worth noting here that it was Lady Ranelagh who patronised Hartlib and not the other way round. She invited him to her Pall Mall house and in the last two years of the Commonwealth, through the influence of her brother Lord Broghill, helped a number of his friends make a safe transition into the monarchist regime. Aside from these social considerations Hartlib clearly respected Lady Ranelagh’s opinion on medical and chemical subjects. His Ephemerides entries often end with phrases such as ‘Much tried by my Lady Ranelagh’ or ‘Lady Ranelagh witnes to it’. Lady Ranelagh had access to her brother’s laboratory and her chemical receipt book, now kept in the British Library, suggests that she had a detailed knowledge of contemporary medical ideas and, as Lynette Hunter pointed out, a number of her receipts were included by the physician Thomas Willis in his Pharmacopoeia Rationalis.

This said, Hartlib himself did not include any of Lady Ranelagh’s recipes in his medical publications and Lady Ranelagh never published under her own name; and whilst he did not make any explicit statements denying the possibility that women might have access to esoteric hidden knowledge he seems to have maintained the existing view of ‘Women’s chemistry’ as ‘Kitchin Physic’, a domestic rather than particularly public activity which was valuable in the home and from which valuable information might be gleaned by others. Though ‘Kitchin Physic’ was on the decline in terms of its perceived worth amongst male commentators, aristocratic women retained their grip on domestic medicine in the 1650s and into the Restoration, whilst, as Lynette Hunter and Steven Shapin have detailed, at the same time being sidelined from the new links that were being forged between natural philosophy and chemistry and in particular the laboratory.

111 On gentlemanly distaste for trade see Shapin, pp.93-4. Shapin acknowledges that aside from ‘gentlemanly society’ the concept of credit was by no means ‘universally distributed and valued’. On Dury and distillation see Newman, p.78.

112 Stubbs I, p.487, notes the assistance received by John Beale.


Elsewhere in the Ephemerides, Hartlib was respectful of the role that women played as midwives. His friend Mr Capel, a minister from Kent, had developed his 'singular skil in all Women diseases' by serving as 'assistant to Midwifes'. He cited skilful midwives from the Low Countries who were able to predict the sex of a child by the position of the moon. A London midwife had a secret Spanish herb which could be used, as Hartlib put it, to 'miraculously bring Women abed, and can facilitate their delivery' suggesting that he, like many of his contemporaries still regarded midwifery as a near-magical activity.

He described how,

At Vlme there is a Colledge of Midwives, who record all their cases or Accidents. Miscarriages successes. etc... But all their observations in this kind are kept mighty secret and only amongst themselves, which notable practise of theirs should bee introduced into other Common-wealths.

In this case he added the words 'Optra Parliamenta' in the margins, indicating that he thought this wealth of empirical experience (like that observed by Petty at Leiden) should be made use of by the state. Likewise, Hartlib reported that a female oculist known to Boyle had performed 'wonderful cures vpon herself and others' but would not part with the Secret' adding, for future reference that her name was 'Mris Hunt'. As with Lady Ranelagh's receipts this information was to be used, but without a commensurate elevation in the social status of the practitioner. In fact, the number of occasions in Hartlib's Ephemerides in which female practitioners can be seen moving outside their established medical domain is small. Where cases do exist they involve women of high social status such as the Countess of Kent. Having tired of her expensive and ineffectual physicians she threw their medicines out of the window and cured herself using her own powder. Hartlib showed a brief interest in this powder (it was made from burnt toads) before concluding that it was a fraud.

Eye witness testimony either from Hartlib himself (and he often requested that healers be brought to his house), or from someone known and respected by him, might help

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115 HP 28/1/65B 'Ephemerides 1649'; HP 31/22/19A 'Ephemerides 1648'
116 HP 28/1/40A 'Ephemerides 1649'
117 HP 29/5/43A 'Ephemerides 1649'
118 HP 29/5/43A 'Ephemerides 1649'
119
establish the credibility of a claim, but even then this could be rejected if, as was the case with 'Mr Babbington' (a man who had 'a great number of most approved Medicins and Experiments'), information was offered in a swaggering, offensively reassured manner. Babbington's contact, 'a certain German lodged at a French-mans in Durham-yarde', was 'mountebanking' because he excluded the possibility that anybody else might cure the 'stone' with his recipe. Information that Hartlib received from books was subjected to a similar sort of scrutiny. He remarked for example that the polymath Georgius Agricola (1494-1555) was 'a meere Braggadocio' because he wrote 'of many things as if he had tried them, which he never did'. Descartes was also criticised for 'too much bragging' and because 'hee promises more in his general discourse [Discours de la méthode (1637)] then hee dose performe.' Learning was not to be taken at face value. As Hartlib noted in 1649,

...there is a great difference betweene writing Philosophically and sophistically, the latter involving lyes and falsehoods with long discourses and enigmatical digressions, the other writing truths though mystically yet truly but concisely which the filii Artis [that is the sons of the art] may come to vnderstand.

He noted alongside that 'Paracelsus writes often sophistically but not so Helmont... Helmont writes as plain as any of the great write but all along concisely that is truly Philosophically'. Hartlib, like Boyle, favoured Van Helmont's work above that of Paracelsus, and though, as we have seen above, he was interested in the latter's medical and chemical writings, there is little indication that he engaged with the political and social ideas of the Swiss polemicist.

For all his comments about sophistry, it was when dealing with alchemical or spagyric medicines (medicines derived from the combustion of minerals and herbs) that Hartlib's approach displayed its greatest inconsistencies. As we have noted above in the cases of George Starkey and William Rand, many of the alchemists who were either in contact with Hartlib or known to him, were opposed both to the free dissemination of

\[ HP 28/1/45B 'Ephemerides 1649' \]
\[ HP 30/4/92B 'Ephemerides 1643'; HP 29/6/2A-B 'Ephemerides 1647' \]
\[ HP 30/4/18B 'Ephemerides 1639' \]
\[ HP 28/2/24A 'Ephemerides 1649'. This approach to Paracelsus was common in England. On this point see Allen G. Debus, The English Paracelsians (London: Oldbourne Book Company, 1965); HP 31/22/24A 'Ephemerides 1648'. Other candidates for criticism included a German alchemist 'Von Callen' of whom Hartlib remarked '[he] is a meere simple Idiot and Chymical Sophister'. \]
alchemical remedies and to the practice of medicine by those they regarded as unsuited
to do so.

Though this was justified, according to Noah Biggs (whose *Mataeotechnica Medicinae*
(1651) was addressed to Cromwell's Parliament), on grounds that without the 'reason
and experience' of the spagyrist, alchemical medicine would be open to the same sort of
abuse as the 'Galenical way of Physick', the basis for this refusal to disclose information
was in fact situated beyond this sort of rhetoric (which, as we have seen in Chapter 1,
was common to assaults of Galenists on popular medicine), in the culture of alchemy
and alchemical writing.123

The latter, as W.R. Newman has detailed, is a genre that goes back to at least the fourth
century A.D.124 It was centred around the creation of an aura of mystique and secrecy
on the part of the alchemist. Alchemists were, according to the accounts of Biggs and
Starkey, godly, morally pure, diligent, and learned men who would, at all costs, keep
their arcane knowledge from falling into the wrong hands.125 Their medicines were,
regardless of the appeal that they, along with laymen, made to notions of sympathetic or
antipathetic healing, superior to those of 'old Wives, Quacks and the like'.126 Whether
supported by the doctrine of signatures or by a bastardised form of Galenism, lay
medical knowledge could be of little value unless the practitioner possessed a deep
knowledge both of the 'Seminall vertue' by which the Earth produced herbs (an idea
central to Helmont's work and much favoured by Biggs and Starkey), and of the effects
of fire on herbs and minerals.127 As an 'art', 'Pyrotechny' was not known to artisans,
craftsmen and others who operated furnaces.

Debus, 'Paracelsian Medicine: Noah Biggs and the Problem of Medical Reform' in Debus (ed.),
*Medicine in Seventeenth Century England*, (California and London: University of California Press,
1974), pp.33-78
124 Newman, pp.84-91. On the use of this genre in the middle ages see Richard Kieckhefer,
language of secrecy in the seventeenth century see Jan Golinski, 'Chemistry in the Scientific
Revolution: Problems of Language and Communication', in David C. Lindberg and Robert S.
Westman (eds), *Reappraisals of the Scientific Revolution*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,
1990), pp.367-96
125 See for example Biggs, Sig. B2r and Starkey, *Nature's Explication and Helmont's Vindication*
(1657), Sig. A4r-A5r
126 Starkey, p.49
127 Starkey, Sig. A4r; Biggs, p.39
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There is evidence to suggest that despite his support for Boyle's plans to provide free chemical remedies to the poor, Hartlib was also interested in secrecy when it came to certain alchemical recipes and texts. He placed particular value on the manuscripts of Bacon and John Dee (1527-1608) and Robert Fludd (1574-1637), treating these and other hermetic or Cabbalistic texts as potential sources of priscia scientia, or knowledge that was uncorrupted by the Fall of Man. Manuscripts detailing pansophic schemes for the organisation of knowledge were also to be protected from the prying eyes of the multitude. As he noted in his Ephemerides in 1655,

There is a MS. with Serrarius called Informatorium Wigeli of about 30 sheetes which contains a Method of attaining to Universal knowledge more then by other Book's that ever have beene written especially in Natural knowledges...This MS. hee was wont only to impart as a secret to Men of approoved integrity etc and would by no meanes to have it made common.

Whereas most manuscripts of this nature were distinguished by their complexity and by their difficulty, Hartlib feared that the work of the German logicians Joachim Jungius and J.A. Tassius - work comparable with the philosopher's stone in its promise of 'ad summam perfectionem in Politicis' - would, by its very simplicity, make it liable to abuse by 'the wicked world'.

Article five of Christianae Societatis Pactum, a declaration of pansophic aims signed by Hartlib, Dury and Clodius in August 1652, stated that,

The greater secrets [Arcana maiora] that the divine benignity deigns to reveal to us must be dispensed with great caution: this also goes for those whom we admit to the notice of our society, lest that which we should have remained secret be made public, and we expose ourselves thereby to the jealousy, malice, suspicion, and tyranny of ambitious men, or to the avarice and power of important persons.

At this point in time the category of 'ambitious men' was yet to include George Starkey (the split with him occurred in February 1654), and article nine of the same pact stated

128 On Hartlib and secrecy see Clucas, 'Samuel Hartlib's Ephemerides', pp.40-43
129 HP 29/5/27B 'Ephemerides 1655'
130 HP 29/4/17B 'Ephemerides 1654'. Though not mentioned in this particular Ephemerides entry, the traditional patter of alchemical texts predicted political and economic instability if secrets fell into the hands of unscrupulous persons. For Jungius and Tassius see Clucas, 'In Search of 'The True Logick' ', p.63
that the signatories would 'serve his profit and honor' — presumably in the hope that he in turn would help further their plans for reform.132

Hartlib's concern about the vulgarisation of arcane knowledge was shared by others in the Hartlib Circle. Platteres, who, as we have seen, was also interested in collecting medicines for the poor, complained in his 'Caveat for Alchymists' (which was published in the same volume as Boyle's 'Epistolical Discourse') that his mind was of 'a size too great, to value, or regard the speeches of the common people, more than the chattering of Magpyes, or the prattling of Parrots'.133 For Worsley, 'the mystery', for so he referred to manuscripts that dealt with the anima mundi or world soul that was at the centre of his hermetic view of the world, was so shrouded in 'dark shadows' as to be kept from the public.134 He was joined in this view by Beale who described, in a letter to Hartlib concerning a proposed College of Mechanics, his desire that while some 'devises' be 'exposed freely to all beholders' others be limited 'to the sonnes of Arte'; and by Cheney Culpeper whose interest in empirical remedies and mining was kept apart from his acquisition and study of hermetic texts.135

Though, as Jan Golinski suggests, 'Boyle had not completely freed himself from the traditional practices of secrecy', particular care needs to be taken before equating Boyle's approach with that of other members of the Hartlib Circle. As both Golinski and Hunter note, Boyle's occasional insistence on secrecy when disseminating recipes (he begged one recipient not to lose what had been imparted to him as a 'secret') was, at this point in time, motivated not by a strict desire to withhold the philosopher's stone from the populace — he was, in his 'Epistolical Discourse', adamant that, if found, the Elixir should, as 'our Makers Revelation', be freely imparted to others, attacking Starkey over his refusal to do so — but by his conscience when it came to vows of secrecy.136 Having given his word or made an oath (which Boyle disliked doing to the extent that in 1680 he

132 Newman, p.79
133 Gabriel Plattes, 'A Caveat for Alchymists' in Hartlib (ed.) Chymical, Medicinal, and Chyrurgical Addresses, p.49
134 Worsley to Hartlib September 8th 1650 quoted in Clucas, 'Samuel Hartlib's Ephemerides', p.43
135 Beale to Hartlib January 10th 1656 quoted in Oster, 'The Scholar and the Craftsman revisited', p.274; Clucas, 'The Correspondence of a XVII-Century Chymicall Gentleman', p.154
declined the presidency of the Royal Society), he was loath to break it, regardless of the secret over which it was made.

A view of Boyle as open to the dissemination of alchemical remedies can perhaps be reconciled with a view of him as secretive if we make a distinction between finished therapies, and the knowledge, processes and methods that would be required to produce them. As the work of L.M. Principe indicates, there is evidence to suggest that Boyle, if not overtly secretive during his association with the Hartlib Circle, certainly became secretive when, during the 1670s, he was working on substances such as incandescent mercury at the Royal Society. In this case, Isaac Newton (having previously warned Boyle about the importance of secrecy in alchemical matters) praised him for his prudence in keeping 'high silence' as to his methods when he came to publish his work in the *Philosophical Transactions*.137

The Godly Commonwealth

I am not of their opinion, Who would have all men practise physic. Tis the same, as for all soldiers to bee commanders; & all christians to bee Pastors.

John Beale138

Social and epistemological distinctions similar to those concerning alchemy can also be seen in the wider reforms proposed by Hartlib and his closest associates. Petty's *Nosocomium Academicum* was to be run by a hierarchy of medical practitioners. At the top would come physicians and vice-physicians who as 'lovers of knowledge' would be trained in Latin and Greek, something which ran contrary to the attacks of other medical writers on 'pagan' and scholastic learning. These would be supported by surgeons, apothecaries, stewards (included a scholar 'skill'd in the best rules of judiciall astrology'), nurses, and finally 'honest carefull ancient Widowes' who were 'to serve as Nurses to the sick' and to 'be taken on, and dismissed again' as needed. A tiered salary


138 HP 51/74A-75B John Beale, 'Memo on Medicine & Surgery' February 11th 1659
Chapter 3

scale would be paid from the hospital’s revenues and augmented, though only in the case of physicians, with exemption from taxation and other public work.¹³⁹

Whilst some features of this scheme (most notably the co-operation that Petty envisaged between physicians and apothecaries) can be attributed to his time in Leiden, others were far from unique. Both as Latin Secretary to the Council of State from 1649 and in his tract Of Education (1644) which was addressed to Hartlib, John Milton pushed for Latin and Greek to be preserved in the education of the élite. Running parallel to his proposals were Hartlib and Dury’s plans for the reform of education as a whole. The approach here was also hierarchical and involved the division of education into four tiers,

The first for the Vulgar, whose life is to be Mechanical. The Second for the Gentry and the Nobles who are to bear the charges in the Commonwealth. The Third for Scholars, who are to teach others Humane Arts and Sciences. And the Fourth for the sons of the Prophets, who are a seminary for the Ministry.¹⁴⁰

Dury petitioned Cromwell to establish a polity which would be governed by ‘Supream’ and ‘Subordinate’ magistrates and by ‘God’s Elect’. While the former would deal with secular government, the latter or ‘Apostles’ (as Dury also termed them), would ‘beget the life of Godliness in Believers’. ‘Pastors of the Church’ and ‘Professors of the Gospel’ would be required to preach to ‘the simple sort’ and to chastise ‘hypocrites and stubborn sinners’.¹⁴¹ If we consider the role of Dury’s minister we can see that there are similarities with the role of the physician as described in Petty’s scheme. Both were to be learned, disciplined and morally pure, and both were to be men - Dury believing strongly that because of the ‘difference which God hath put between the Male and the Female’, women’s duties should be domestic.¹⁴² As the minister administered the sacraments to his congregation so too the physician, through the Office of Address (which was there to care for both the body and the soul), administered medicine for the

¹³⁹ Petty, pp.9-11. Physicians were to be paid £120 per annum, vice-physicians £50, surgeons and apothecaries £60 and nurses £4. Petty hoped that as a result of their work in the hospital physicians would receive patronage from others.
¹⁴⁰ Dury, Considerations Tending, p.22
¹⁴¹ J.D. [John Dury], The Earnest Breathings of Forreign Protestants...Addressed to his Highness, the Next Parliament, and the Good People of the Land, (1658), p.26 and Sig. B1v and p.3. Though Dury envisaged close co-operation between the secular and religious arms of the state, he did not wish the one to interfere with the other. On this point see his A Case for Conscience Concerning Ministers Medling with State Matters in or out of their Sermons..., (1650). The text is discussed in J.M. Batten, John Dury. Advocate of Christian Reunion, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1944), pp.120-21
¹⁴² Dury, The Earnest Breathings, p.24
population. Whilst the populace had access to scripture, it was the Godly elect who guided them in its interpretation. Strong similarities exist between Dury's model society and that advocated by English Calvinists such as William Bradshaw and Thomas Cartwright. All drew direct comparisons between medicine and religion. Just as Dury and Hartlib regularly exchanged the titles of 'physician' or 'doctor' with that of 'minister', so the Presbyterian Bradshaw used the term 'doctor' to describe the office of those dedicated to giving religious instruction. This said, the most marked difference between these two groups came in Plattes' belief (which was supported by Hartlib), that ministers should actually act as medical practitioners — something which, as we have seen in Chapter 1, many doctrinally rigid Calvinists were reluctant to countenance.

Though Hartlib and Dury lived at a time of great political and social upheaval, both men, as was suggested in the opening quote from the Gospel according to St Luke, hoped for an ordered, structured society that would reflect the 'different outward states and particular callings...wherein God doth set people in this life'. Physicians and laymen would be asked to interact in ways that, though radical in relation to the hitherto informal sort of symbiosis, were nevertheless conservative in the attention that they paid to existing ideas about gender and learning.

143 Dury, Considerations Tending, p.37
144 Morgan, p.87
145 Plattes, Macaria, p.6, 'In Macaria, the parson of every parish is a good physician, and doth execute both functions, to wit, cura animarum & cura corporum, and they think it absurd for a divine to be without skill of physick'. Morgan, p.90, notes the complaints of Thomas Cartwright and John Winthrop against priest-physicians.
146 Dury, The Earnest Breathings, p.5
147 On Petty's conservatism see Cook, p.111
Chapter 4

Restoration Society and the Interest in Lay Medical Culture

Introduction

Whatever the differences in their approaches, the majority of historians writing either at the time of or in the years following the restoration of Charles II in April 1660 were united in one thing. They identified Presbyterians and religious sectaries as central to the unrest between king and parliament that had led to a series of bloody civil wars and to the execution of Charles I in January 1649. According to John Dauncey's History of His Sacred Majesty, which was published in 1660, these groups had been responsible for corrupting the king's subjects. Likewise the antiquarian William Dugdale in his Short View of the Late Troubles in England (1681) saw Protestant radicals as evil men who had conspired against the king. The earl of Clarendon Edward Hyde (an exile from 1668 until his death in 1674), though hardly flattering in his portrayal of Charles I, also saw incendiary Parliamentarian clergymen and Scottish Presbyterians as hostile to the ecclesiastical order. Finally Thomas Hobbes (himself a learned 'enthusiast' or atheist in the eyes of many) included Presbyterian “murderers” of Charles I, “Papists”, and “future advocates of liberty of religion, or Independents and other sectaries” as “seducers of the people” in his Behemoth, or the Long Parliament (1679) — a text which, like his earlier Leviathan (1651), advocated the strict subordination of subjects to their king.

The Civil War influenced attitudes in such a way that, when compounded by later events such as the Popish Plot (1678) and the Exclusion Crisis (1679), would, in the minds of many, leave a lasting association with religious fanaticism. Writing during the anti-Catholic Gordon Riots which swept London in 1780 and ended in hundreds of deaths and the destruction of property, Edward Gibbon exclaimed how “Forty thousand

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2 Clarendon’s The History of the Rebellion and Civil Wars in England, Begun in the Year 1641 was published in 1703.
3 Quoted in MacGillivray, p.71. ibid., p.64. Hobbes’ text was written in 1668 and circulated in manuscript prior to publication.
Puritans, such as might be seen in the time of Cromwell, have started out of their graves".4 "Enthusiasm", already a derogatory label for religious sectaries prior to both the Reformation and the Civil War, would, in the years that followed the Restoration, be associated with groups such as Fifth Monarchists, Quakers, and Catholics.5 Likewise, the language of melancholic madness and physiological dysfunction, which was central to the writings of earlier authors such as Robert Burton and André Du Laurens, would increasingly be used to describe those who claimed to be involved with prophecies, ecstasies and miraculous cures. Their afflictions, though no longer seen as the work of the devil or evil spirits (a conclusion which did not, for men such as the Cambridge Platonist Henry More and the scholar and divine Meric Casaubon, exclude a belief in the existence of these supernatural beings), were now regarded as contagious diseases that were liable to infect other "rude and unprepared" men and women.6

Neither were the learned immune to accusations of enthusiasm. While Casaubon's *Treatise Concerning Enthusiasme* (1655) had dwelt at length on subjects such as the trances of female mystics (women being susceptible to what he called "hysterica passionis") his *Letter...to Peter du Moulin concerning...natural experimental philosophie* (1669) was an attack on the Royal Society and its perceived threat to scholastic and humanistic culture.7 Notably, he saw parallels between the plans for educational reform that had been advanced by Hartlib and Dury during the Interregnum, and those outlined in Joseph Glanvill's *Plus Ultra* (1668), a text which was written partly as a response to accusations by an elderly divine Robert Crosse, that the Royal Society was a "Jesuitical" conspiracy against the Church, and partly to cement Glanvill's existing position within the Royal Society, he having been chaplain to the Parliamentarian Francis Rous prior to the Restoration.8 Both Casaubon and Henry Stubbe, a Warwickshire doctor and defender of the privileges of the College of Physicians who published a number of inflammatory tracts between

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5 Central to this context is Michael Heyd, "Be Sober and Reasonable". *The Critique of Enthusiasm in the Seventeenth and Early Eighteenth Centuries*, (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995).
7 Casaubon quoted in Heyd, p.91
8 Harold J. Cook, *The Decline of the Old Medical Regime in Stuart London* (London and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1980), p.179, fn.139. This attitude echoed a long held belief that 'Puritanism' was part of a Jesuitical plot to destroy true Protestantism.
1670 and 1671, claimed that the Royal Society was misled in its attachment to innovations such as the 'new science' and what, in the words of Stubbe, were "Pseudo-Chymists" and "Quacksalvers".¹⁰

This sort of complaint was also voiced at Oxford where the Royal Society and the 'experimental natural philosophy', rather being seen as allies of the Restoration episcopacy and its theology (an association that has been by a number of later historians)¹¹ were seen by some more conservative members of the university as threats to the Aristotelian natural philosophy that had, since the Middle Ages, been regarded as the "handmaiden" of theology.¹² Under the auspices of the returned Royalist exile Gilbert Sheldon the university was itself purged of many of those who were thought to have had sympathies with the Interregnum regime.¹³ Perhaps most striking for those who, after the Restoration, took an interest in areas of lay medicine such as magical healing and witchcraft was the fact that accusations of enthusiasm might also be levelled against those who regarded themselves as religious conformists and critics of enthusiasm. This occurred in the case of Henry More, who, on account of his particular sort of spiritualism and Platonism, was accused of both 'enthusiasm' and 'atheism' by Anglican divines at Cambridge.¹⁴ While members of the Royal Society were subjected to a potent mixture of raillery, wit, satire and philosophical criticism (some of which came from

¹⁰ Henry Stubbe, *Campanella Revis’d or, an Enquiry into the History of the Royal Society...*(1670), 'To the Reader' quoted in Heyd, "Be Sober and Reasonable", p.149. For Stubbe see also Hunter, *Science and Society*, p.137


within the Society itself), More and Casaubon would, by the beginning of the eighteenth century, be regarded by some as 'credulous'.

While the details of these changes remain to be elucidated in the chapters that follow, it should be clear that those interested in lay medical culture faced challenges that were linked not just to contemporary perceptions of 'enthusiasts', 'the vulgar' or 'the common people', but to broader theological and intellectual debates. While some of these challenges related to an individual's institutional affiliations or social milieu, others related to personal histories and, in particular, the interests and ideological attachments that an individual may have had prior to the Restoration. This said, it would perhaps be an exercise in reductionism to see changing attitudes towards lay medical culture as purely the result of historical circumstances. As will be suggested below, it is more fitting to examine the ways in which individuals negotiated their positions, both in public and (more elusively) in private, in relation to what they themselves perceived to be contemporary values and beliefs. Likewise, while we may accept that changes in theological, cosmological and political thinking had resonance for medical culture as a whole, it is also important to recognise the distinctions that contemporaries made between different sorts of medical therapy as well as the areas in which these distinctions were fluid.

Though members of the Royal Society made no specific provisions for the collection of what we, with hindsight, might term 'lay medicine', their activities were in fact directed towards many of the subjects that we have been looking at in previous chapters. This is evident in the case of agriculture where, in the early years of the Royal Society, a wider interest in such related issues as the health of animals and farmers and the collection and organisation of information can be found both at an individual, and at a more collective level.\footnote{See for example Francis Hutchinson, \textit{A Historical Essay Concerning Witchcraft} (1718), p.xiii. Hutchinson gives a list of those who have written works that uphold the opinions of the 'credulous multitude'. Casaubon's \textit{Of Credulity and Incredulity: In Things Naturall, Civil and Divine}, 2 parts, (1668 and 1670) was criticised for its assertion that supernatural phenomena such as witchcraft and demons have a real existence which cannot be explained away by natural causes. Also included on the list were Aubrey's \textit{Miscellanies} (1696) which, in Hutchinson's opinion, taught people 'charms and sorcery' and Francis Perrault's \textit{The Devill of Mason} (1658) the English edition of which contained a letter from Boyle to the translator. Boyle disowned the text in 1677. I am grateful to Michael Hunter for this last piece of information.}

\footnote{As in the 'Introduction' to this thesis, I exclude anatomy, physiology, and surgery from my definition of 'lay medicine'. A committee to deal with these matters was established on January 27th 1664; cf. Hunter, \textit{ETNS}, p.79}
corporate level, in correspondence, the minutes of meetings, and in the formation, on
March 23rd 1664, of an Agricultural Committee. It is also evident in the topographical
projects which the Society was involved with and in the related surveys and
questionnaires that it produced. Finally, lay medicine intersected at numerous points
with Robert Boyle's commitments to Christian charity and natural philosophy. The
Somerset clergyman John Beale was particularly prominent in the area of agriculture and
agricultural medicine and it is to him that we turn now.

John Beale: rural medicine and the new science

Beale was fifty-two years old at the time of the Restoration and, in common with his
contemporaries, his experiences and the views that he developed prior to this time
should not be discounted in assessing his later attitudes. Like Robert Boyle and John
Evelyn, Beale spent some time at Eton where from 1624 Sir Henry Wotton was
headmaster. Wotton was not only a fine humanist but also promoted the writings of
his personal friend Bacon as well as natural philosophy in general. At Eton he was able
to build on the grounding in Greek and Latin that he had received at Worcester
Cathedral School. He also gained a detailed knowledge of Christian humanism from the
man he termed the 'walking bibliophile', John Hales, and, importantly for the effect
that they had on his later interests, his initial familiarity with res rustica, in the form of
texts by Varro, Columella, Cato, and Palladius.

Beale's whereabouts between 1627 and 1629 are unknown. He matriculated from King's
College, Cambridge in 1629, receiving his B.A. in 1633 before proceeding to his M.A. in
1636. With the exception of a brief period of travel he held a fellowship at King's
between 1632 and 1640. Here he was given considerable freedom in his studies
benefiting no doubt from the anti-Aristotelian feeling which, though not typical of
Oxford and Cambridge colleges in general, was (as we have noted in the previous
chapter) particularly strong in some Cambridge colleges. His reading included Galileo,
Descartes, Bacon, and Campanella, as well as a number of Hermetic and Neoplatonic
authors. Thanks to his friendship with King's College's librarian Abraham Wheelock, he

17 Stubbs I, p.471. Beale entered Eton in 1622 and left some time before 1627, the year he
turned nineteen and would have been required to leave by college statutes.
18 Stubbs I, p.468; ibid., p.471 and fn. 39
19 Stubbs I, p.472, fn. 41
also had access to the University's recently acquired eastern manuscripts. This was accompanied both by a growing interest in natural magic, astrology and the interpretation of dreams (subjects he regarded as 'Lawful'), and by an attempt to disassociate himself from what he termed "wicked magic". This, as commentators such as D.P. Walker have noted, was a common habit amongst Renaissance hermeticists.

While at least some of Beale's activities as a member of the Hartlib Circle have been detailed in the previous chapter, it should be noted here that it was through his association with Hartlib that Beale forged many of his intellectual ideas and friendships. Hartlib sent Beale reading suggestions to which the clergyman replied with his comments and long, and at times rambling, reflections on subjects that included dreams, apparitions and angels, Herefordshire agriculture, the eating habits of peasants, and the loss, at the Fall of Man, of a paradisical diet. Beale met the future secretary of the Royal Society Henry Oldenburg (then tutor to Boyle's nephew Richard Jones, and himself a man of millenarian beliefs) through Hartlib and Lady Ranelagh, and it was at Hartlib's instigation that Beale and Evelyn corresponded with one another for the first time in September 1659. This was the beginning of a long and friendly correspondence that lasted until Beale's death in April 1683, an event which Evelyn marked by writing him an epitaph. Though Evelyn's theological position ruled out any shared interest in subjects such as alchemy, the two men did share a common interest in millenarianism (Evelyn, for example, wrote in 1655 to the theologian Jeremy Taylor about his interest in the 'harbinger of the great day'), and the practical and spiritual aspects of gardening and landscape design.

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21 As Stubbs points out (Stubbs I, p.474), eastern manuscripts were then a great rarity in England. As I have mentioned in the previous chapter, the collection and interpretation of such manuscripts was a preoccupation with a number of the members of the Hartlib Circle.


23 HP 67/7/1A-3B Beale to Hartlib n.d.; HP 62/25/1A-4B Beale to Hartlib February 23rd 1657. A copy of this letter also exists as BL Sloane MS 4292, f.82r-v


25 This, as far as I know, has never been noticed. Evelyn's epitaph to Beale can be found as BL Evelyn MS 39B 'Letter Book', f.20r (Epistle CCCCLVII), Evelyn to Jonathan Taylor n.d. Taylor was Beale's amanuensis.

These horticultural interests were motivated by factors that included a common attachment to Baconian principles of public utility (the two collaborated on *Pomona* (1664)\(^{27}\), a text that dealt with the salutary advantages of cider production), and the joint emphasis on health and virtue that was to be found both in the writings of Virgil and Horace, and in the works of contemporaries such as Phillip Sidney, Abraham Cowley, and Thomas Browne.\(^{28}\) During the politically disturbed 1650s both the countryside and gardens (but gardens in particular), were seen as places of *ataraxia* or tranquillity where men could escape from public life and the extremes of passion and distress. As Evelyn put it in a letter to Browne (whose *The Garden of Cyrus...mystically considered* (1658) had been published recently), “Gardens do contribute to contemplative and philosophicall Enthusiasme...for these expedients do influence the soule and spirits of man, and prepare them for converse with good Angells”.\(^{29}\)

Beale supported him in this view assuring him that the antique garden he was working on for his *Elysium Britannicum* (a work which was not published) would, with its sweet fragrances and grottoes, attract ‘good angels and divine inspirations’.\(^{30}\) As Peter Goodchild notes, Beale’s *Herefordshire Orchards* (1657), with its idyllic description of wealthy and poor alike planting sweet smelling gardens and orchards, played at least some part in Evelyn’s decision to write *Fumifugium* (1661), a text in which he advocated

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27 Beale had already advocated the advantages of cider as a national drink in *Herefordshire Orchards, A Pattern for All England* (1657). *Pomona* was published as an appendix to Evelyn’s *Sylva, or a Discourse of Forest Trees...*, (1664) which dealt with, amongst other things, the economic advantages of growing trees and the medicines that could be extracted from tree bark.


29 Evelyn to Browne 28th January 1660 quoted in Perry, ‘Evelyn as Hortulan Saint’, p.135; Evelyn’s focus on *ataraxia* owed much to his overall interest in Epicurean thinking, and it is this, rather than any decline in the acceptability of angelology, that may have prompted him to move away from the spiritual aspects of gardening in the work that he published after the Restoration. Epicurean ideas suffered a decline amongst strict moralists such as Evelyn, when, in the 1660s, they were taken up by such court libertines as the duke of Buckingham and the earl of Rochester. As the Restoration brought a return to theological orthodoxy Evelyn may, as was the case with his work on Lucretius, have dropped Epicurus’ writings altogether on the grounds that the pagan author denied the immortality of the soul. On this point see Carola and Alistair Small, ‘John Evelyn and the Garden of Epicurus’, *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. LX, (1997), pp.194-214. An alternative explanation which focuses on Evelyn’s preparation for a public role in Restoration society is provided by Michael Hunter in ‘John Evelyn in the 1650s: A Virtuoso in Quest of a Role’, *Science and the Shape of Intellectual Orthodoxy: Intellectual Change in Late Seventeenth-Century Britain*, (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 1995), pp.67-98

30 Quoted in Perry, p.141
the use of scented flowers and trees to ameliorate the London air. Likewise, Evelyn’s plans for an antique garden may also have been influenced by Beale’s description of Backbury Hill in Herefordshire. This secluded summit close to the place of Beale’s birth had been the dwelling places of ‘old Britaines’, ‘Silures’, and ‘Romanes’ and was as such, far closer to the ‘first Paradise’ than any ‘Modern Gardens’. It was also for Beale, a retreat from the turbulence of war and a place where he met the hermit and mystic Henry Hereford to discuss the powers of prophecy.

While Backbury Hill may have provided Beale with such a retreat his political affiliations at this time are hard to pin down. By virtue of his links with the Hartlib Circle and on the basis of his biblical millenarianism, Charles Webster locates him amongst the parliamentarians, an argument that is assisted by the patronage he received from his relative the Parliamentarian Edward Phelips, and by the fact that during the siege of Hereford in 1645 he and his wife sought refuge with the Parliamentarian camp at Shrewsbury. However, the picture is more complicated, with Beale being both ejected from and then intruded into a number of different lay and ecclesiastical posts as the local balance of power shifted with the movements of the warring armies and their sympathisers. Added to this is the fact that early in his clerical career Beale had received preferment from Laud, only to withdraw his support from Charles I’s archbishop in the 1630s on the grounds of freedom of conscience. A tenable view of Beale is that of a man whose interests at this time could, if we are heavy-handed enough, be allied to a number of different political ideologies. As it was, his exposure to the ecclesiology of Dury and Hartlib, and to Richard Baxter’s proposals for associated

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31 Peter H. Goodchild, ‘“No phantastical utopia, but a reall place”. John Evelyn, John Beale and Backbury Hill, Herefordshire’, *Garden History*, 19, (1991), pp.105-27; *ibid.*, p.122 Beale to Evelyn September 30th 1659 ‘Tis time for London to think of this, and to accept of a sweete and easy remedy agst ye corrosive smoake of their seacoale, yt cut off more than halfe their dayes.’

32 Goodchild, pp.118-19; Stubbs II, p.477. A onetime fellow of St John’s College Oxford, Henry Hereford may have been related to Beale by marriage.

33 Webster, pp.11-12; Goodchild, p.115.

34 Stubbs I, pp.475-6

35 Leslie, p.153 citing a letter from Beale to Evelyn, August 30th 1662, in which Beale described his early preferment by Laud. On Beale’s withdrawal of support see Goodchild, p.115.

36 Goodchild, p.115 notes that ‘During the course of the war Beale had associated himself with the Parliamentarians, but it would seem that he may well have been one of those who were caught in the middle ground and could not give themselves unreservedly to one side or the other.’
churches made him an advocate of religious tolerance, unity amongst Christians, and with it, obedience to a secular ruler.37

Like his friends, Beale may have sensed that the transition between Cromwellian and monarchist rule would, when it arrived (the likelihood of this being greatly increased by Cromwell's death in September 1658), involve the further intrusion and ejection of churchmen. It was in the context of both these wider political changes and a local dispute at Stretton Grandison in Herefordshire (where Beale had been intruded in 1656) that, on the advice of Hartlib, Lady Ranelagh, and through her Lord Broghill, intervened to assist him in retaining his position as vicar of Yeovil and rector of Sock Denis in Somerset.38 After the Restoration Beale was, despite maintaining some of his earlier theological positions, outwardly loyal to episcopacy being made one of the King's chaplains in 1665. This said, he was critical of what he perceived to be happening in fashionable society, and these criticisms were reflected in his attitude towards scientific activity.

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Though Beale was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in January 1664 on account of his practical knowledge of cider making and the friendship and interest he had garnered with Oldenburg and Evelyn, his early involvement with the Society is perhaps most striking for the attempts that he made to perpetuate some of the Hartlib Circle's schemes for the collection and sorting of information. Writing to another Fellow of the Royal Society, Lord Brereton, in March of that year he remarked that,

What honest Mr Hartlib intended for an office of address, may (by separating the incumbering dros) be easily digested and appropriated for all ye weighty engagements of the R.S. And marry this of very publ[ic] concernment will yet deserve no better record...39

Though Hartlib had failed, through lack of state funding, to establish an Office of Address, it seems clear that Beale saw value in the sort of ad hoc or piecemeal collecting from books and word-of-mouth contact that had resulted in Hartlib's Ephemerides and in publications such as Gabriel Plattes' Profitable Intelligencer (1644) and Samuel Hartlib bis

37 Stubbs I, pp.484-85. For Beale's discussion of associated churches see Dr Williams' Library Correspondence, iii, Letter 135 Beale to Richard Baxter August 14th 1658
38 Stubbs I, p.487
Chapter 4

Legacie (1651)\(^{40}\) — the latter being in part a collection of agricultural secrets and medical remedies designed to assist farmers and other rural dwellers. In fact, it was around schemes such as these, along with their moral, utilitarian, and methodological backdrop, that Beale sought to construct his identity both in relation to the Royal Society and to Restoration society as a whole.

Beale’s attitude to these matters comes across best in a series of letters that he addressed to Oldenburg, Evelyn, and Boyle in 1663. From these we can see the importance he placed both on agricultural and medical information and on the Baconian or Hartlibian notion of a community of correspondents working together to collect and sift it. While Beale may, in the course of the Restoration, have moved away from the notion of paid agents or ‘intelligencers’ (as they were termed by Hartlib and others during the 1650s), he did wish to encourage the exchange of information. He wrote to Boyle suggesting both that he, Boyle, receive the ‘addresses of honest and intelligent persons’ and that the Royal Society establish ‘an anniversary season for rural accommodations and fresh communications.’ Likewise, he assured Oldenburg that ‘Communication must run through all ye veines of ye Main work.’ This would, in his opinion, go some way towards achieving what he termed ‘the Verulamian design’.\(^{41}\)

In common with Robert Plot and John Aubrey, who took authors such as Pliny, Strabo, and Ptolemy as their exemplars, Beale was also influenced by classical models for collecting and relaying information. Writing to Boyle he remarked how he had tilled his ‘poor storehouse’ (a by now familiar metaphor for a commonplace book) with, ‘Cato, Varro, Columella, Palladius, Crescentius, Collet, Pulius, and such as I could get of French, Spanish and Italian rustics...Tusor [sic], Sir H Plat, and G. Plats, and as far as Mr Hartlib’s correspondence would help my information’, and added that he had compared his findings with ‘our modern customs and experience in England.’\(^{42}\) Though here too he referred to books – he reported how he had read ‘Dr Moffet’ and noted the connections

\(^{40}\) The text was written jointly by Hartlib, Plattes, Robert Child and Cressy Dymock.
\(^{41}\) R.S.E.L. O.B. Letter 104 Beale to Boyle November 2nd 1663; Boyle, Works, Vol.6, pp.376-77 Beale to Boyle December 14th 1663; R.S.E.L. B.1. Letter 17 Beale to Oldenburg December 21st 1662; On this point see Stubbs II, p.329
\(^{42}\) Boyle, Works, Vol. 6, p.353 Beale to Boyle November 9th 1663. Possible sources would have included Thomas Tusser’s *Five Hundred Points of Good Husbandry* (1610) and Hugh Plat’s *The Jewell House of Art and Nature. Containing Divers Rare and Profitable Inventions, Together with Sundry New Experiments in the Art of Husbandry, Distillation and Moulding* (1594). For Beale’s earlier use of Plat see HP 62/22/1A-4B Beale to Hartlib February 27th 1657
drawn by the author between healthy animals and the good milk and meat — he also
looked to God's providence and, related to this, the practical experience of farmers and
agricultural labourers, to provide him with information.\footnote{Beale was referring to Thomas
Moffett (1553-1604). His \textit{Healths Improvement} (1655) was a best
seller. On the growth of similar literature see Keith Thomas, \textit{Man and the Natural World},
(London: Penguin Books, 1984)} In the case of the latter he
remarked, 'Noe booke directions can be like their own experience'.\footnote{R.S.E.L. B.i. Letter 43
Beale to Oldenburg? June 27th 1664}

Himself the son of a gentleman farmer, Beale questioned husbandmen about their use
of reddle to cure diseases amongst sheep, noting in a letter to Boyle (who had recently
expressed his interest in animal medicines in \textit{Some Considerations Touching the Usefulness of}
\textit{Experimental Natural Philosophy} that the red ochreous dye might be applicable to humans,
and prompting him to investigate further.\footnote{Boyle, \textit{Works}, Vol.6, p.351 Beale to Boyle November 2nd 1663. As is described below,
Beale attempted to link his observation to Boyle's recently published, \textit{Considerations Touching the}
\textit{Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy} (1663).} He informed Oldenburg of 'Mr Midford', a
gardener from Durham who was able to manufacture 'birchwater' all year round and not
just when the sap was rising, remarking that the sap of herbs and shrubs such as briony
'being found in pretty store' in his locality, was also a good cure for obstructions.\footnote{R.S.E.L. B.i. Letter 52
Beale to Oldenburg n.d. This was perhaps a continuation of Hartlib's
earlier work on birchwater. See above Chapter 3.} He
noted how, as an offshoot of the process of clarifying beer (a process used, in his
opinion, to cheat the excise keeper), 'ale-wives' had discovered a drink made from
'tudmore' or ground-ivy which would evacuate 'rheums, poison, and vapours that
offend the head, ears, and eyes.' Finally, he recalled how, when a physician had
abandoned any hope of curing him of a severe fever, local people at the inn where he
was staying had, in an act of providence, cured him with a plain remedy of currants and
violet and strawberry leaves boiled in sugared water.\footnote{Boyle, \textit{Works}, Vol. 6, p. 372. Beale to Boyle November 9th 1663.}

Beale also described in detail how country people cured themselves of common ailments,
noting that,

\begin{quote}
Country folk have many sluttish medicines, which serve their turn, and favour
to them better than the apothecary's shop. For a bruise, ach, tumour
impostume, or cancered breasts, cow's dung, best when cow's feed in their
kindest pastures, and taken hot as it comes from the body of a cow, and fried
with bears grease; for a stitch in the side, as they call a pleurisy, the juice of
horse-dung, as that comes from the body of a horse, pressed and drunk in their
\end{quote}
Chapter 4

ordinary beer; that of a stone horse, feeding high upon provender, being preferred. Pigs-dung, or rather boar's dung, to stop the blood at the nose. For sore eyes, the white of hen-dung; for sore throats, album graecum, etc etc their own urine etc...

Beale did have a low opinion of the poor. Remembering his experiences in plague-ridden London in the late 1620s he described them as 'boarish' and noted that their smell, like that of pork itself, made him feel nauseous and brought back childhood memories of the small-pox sufferers who had surrounded him whilst the plague was in Eton. Likewise, he demanded the 'vigorous exercise of statutes [to] free ye land from wandring beggars...such idle and theevish persons, as cannot comport wth civile and peaceable society should be forced to serve ther needs, and ye public in our ships and plantations.' However, his use of the word 'sluttish', with its associated meanings of uncleanliness, low birth and unruliness, was not entirely negative. As he pointed out, these medicines were a readily available alternative to those provided by apothecaries. They also brought with them sufficient promise of a cure that he experimented with pigeon-dung in his attempt to heal a tetter or cutaneous disease that he had on the back of his hand.

While Beale did not wish to overthrow the existing medical hierarchy by, as he put it in an earlier letter to Hartlib, '[proving] a farrier a physician', he (having been prescribed the wrong drugs by a physician), did have some regard both for self-medication, and for the therapeutic abilities of the seemingly unlearned. He noted, for example, how

50 RS EL B.1. Beale to Lord Brereton 23rd March 1663
51 The *OED* defines 'sluttish' as 'Of persons: dirty and unruly in dress and habits especially to an extent which is repulsive or disgusting...unclean, low, despicable, immoral, lewd'
52 Boyle, *Works*, Vol. 6, p. 351. Beale to Boyle November 2nd 1663. 'To omit my trial of pigeon-dung, verjuice, vitriols, mercuries, and thousands of others...' The pigeon dung was ineffectual. Similar medicaments were listed by Boyle in his *Medicinal Experiments, or a Collection of Choice and Safe Remedies, for the Most Part Simple, and Easily Prepared: Very Useful in Families, and Fitted for the Service of Country People* (1692). See for example, Boyle, *Works*, Vol. 5, p. 320, 'To clear the Eyes, even from films. Take Paracelsus's *zibethum occidentale*, (viz human dung) of a good colour and consistence; dry it slowly, till it be pulverable: then reduce it into an impalpable powder, which is to be blown once, twice, or thrice a day, as occasion shall require, into the patient's eyes. Class. A.'
53 John Beale, 'Memo on Medicine & Surgery', 11 February 1659, HP 51/74A-75B. '... I fled to disswade him [Mr Bateson, a physician] by prudentiall arguments, That Hee should not disparage his profession, in proveing a farrier a physician'; Boyle, *Works*, Vol.6, p.372 Beale to Boyle November 9th 1663. Beale rejected the strong medicines that he had been prescribed at
Richard Matthew, the supposed inventor of 'Matthew's Pill' had 'found a medicine, that
doth assist any malady'. Likewise, he had moral reservations about the way in which
physicians behaved. For every 'honest and skilful' physician that maintained the body
politic there were, he believed, 'fallen angels' who delivered dangerous drugs. His
message was directed not towards the poor, whom he, in compliance with his view of
Christian charity, sought to provide with whatever remedies he could find, but towards
wealthy, luxury loving people and their physicians who, in his words, 'follow the
fashion as well for choice of medicines, as for the shape of hats and breeches.' While he
was vociferous in his defence of Baconianism and the Royal Society – going so far as to
compile a scheme for their promotion before withdrawing it when he heard in 1667 that
Sprat was working on a similar project – he was critical of what he described as 'the
spawn of the printing press' - new but poorly tested works that constituted no more than
a 'stream of impertinent babble.'

A similar moral stance is also evident in Beale’s attitude towards diet and medicine. He
believed that the countryside was full of ‘healthfull, & cheap food’ in the form of
mushrooms, ‘young stalkes’ and ‘pulperootes of innumerable vegetables’ which went to
waste both because ‘common people’ (whom he did not idealise) lacked the skills to cook
and dress them, and because the urban gentry favoured rich and exotic dishes. If the
gentry were prepared to harden their palates to this ‘Adamite’ diet and to bitter remedies
such as wormwood, then, he believed, divine providence would cure all their
complaints. As he put it in a letter to Boyle,

If the heart were cheerful and fixed on God’s goodness and mercy, the simple
diet of the long living age (water and wholesome grain) would be our best
medicines and preservatives, and this may raise the resolution rather to embrace
poverty, than to fear it.

Eton on grounds that they were poorly suited to his constitution. A similar incident happen to
Boyle when he was at the school.

54 Boyle *Works* Vol. 6, p.351 Beale to Boyle November 2nd 1663. Beale read about ‘Mathews’
Pill’ in *The Unlearned Alchymist his Antidote* (1662). A claim by George Kendall in his *Appendix to
the Unlearned Alchemist* (1664) that Matthews had based his pill on a recipe belonging to George
Starkey led to a priority dispute between Matthews, his wife, and the American alchemist. On
this point see W.R. Newman, *Gehennical Fire. The Lives of George Starkey, an American Alchemist in

55 Boyle *Works* Vol. 6, p.351 Beale to Boyle November 2nd 1663

(which he referred to as ‘Lord Bacons Elogyes &c’) see Hunter, *Science and Society*, ‘Appendix 1’,
pp.194-7

57 HP 62/25/1A-4B Beale to Hartlib November 15th 1659

58 Boyle *Works* Vol. 6, p.350 Beale to Boyle November 2nd 1663
While Beale’s opinion echoes that of earlier Calvinist writers who in their condemnation of exotic drugs had advocated a return to a simpler diet, it also recalls some of the Hartlib Circle’s views on agricultural reform and the importance of making proper economic, and, above all, moral use of the land.\(^5^9\) Though he continued to believe that infertile lands should, as part of a return to ancient practices, be improved and used for growing such crops as apples (which would then be used for medicinal drinks such as redstreak cider), he also recognised the importance of leaving some areas fallow. As he commented to Oldenburg in January 1662,

> In Hereford & many other local places Wermewood: somewhere Mugwort, & generally all salubrious kinds of vegetable begin to creepe in. The Eringo roote contending for the most naturall precedency, & leading the way for all kinds of Thistles, wch in time would turne the husbandmans greatest curse into a blessing; and beare the charge of weeding his fallowes, corne and pasture. For ye Holy Thistle & Mary Thistle to ye wildest all obey their physiognomy & open the pores and bladder to evacuate noxious and putride humours by the easiest purgation; and to sweeten human converse.

Or, as he also put it in the same letter,

> T’is a great question whether Gods most obvious & vulgar guifts be not of most general behoofe, if duely valued and used. For those we call Elements they carry it. In ye Ayre our breath and liefe, in water, our cleanlines & refreshment. In fire our cheerefulness and warmth, in earth our foode and rayment. And in docke, nettles, thistles &c our purgatives and medicines.\(^6^0\)

Beale’s view may, as Stubbs and Jacob have illustrated, be seen as a forerunner to what was, by the mid-1670s, a far more strident attack on the exploitation of agriculture and science in the interests of luxury and excess, though at this point in time it was, in my opinion, unlikely that his essentially moral and religious position would have been politicised in the manner which is implied by these authors.\(^6^1\) What is perhaps more striking here is the way in which Beale used the notion of vulgarity to promote his medical ideas. By appealing to his audience (in this case Oldenburg, though a wider rhetorical purpose may have been intended), to look for medicines among all that which was immediate and common, Beale was rejecting the gentlemanly pursuits that were followed by many of his colleagues. Though they were friends, and had both been

\(^{59}\) For earlier Calvinist views see above Chapter 3, fn.84. Beale recommended John Parkinson’s *Paradisi in Sole: Paradisus Terrestris* (1629) to the Agricultural Committee.

\(^{60}\) R.S.E.L B.1. Letter 18. Beale to Oldenburg Jan 15th 1662
associated with Hartlib, the contrast between his approach and that of Evelyn could not have been stronger. Whereas Evelyn, in keeping with an example set by men such as the Earl of Arundel, devoted his attention to 'Exotick, and very rare Seacretts' (he constructed a hierarchy of trades in which the 'Useful and purely Mechanic' were least valued), Beale placed the practical and useful at the centre of his programme. And while Evelyn regarded his *Elysium Britannicum* as unfit for 'Cabbage Planters', Beale deliberately sought to patronise these men.62

Beale used the notion of vulgarity to explain both the object of his interest and his method of working. In writing to Boyle he described his 'experiments' in 'georgical and rustical affairs', as 'vulgar matters' and 'the vilest trifles' and apologised for having ever sent them. Nevertheless, behind this rather self-effacing approach there was the belief that his researches, though not on a par with Boyle's 'microscopical, magnetical, chemical, and mathematical discoveries', would be useful.63 As he noted in an earlier letter to Boyle,

...you may justly ask me, what I mean by this? and whether anything can be more trivial, or more vulgar than this? or whether any physician, or surgeon cannot discover much better or nobler things than these?

To all which I answer that when I have explained my aim, I shall not be ashamed to say, that the more vulgar the things are the better and more useful they may be to the generality of the people: and the vulgarity of these generalities do not exclude, but introduce the more received experiments of professed surgeons and physicians: and above all things I would decline the affectation of telling wonders and rarities; for it is a temptation to step beyond the just proportion of truth, and can signify no more than *penes authorem fides* [trans. 'credence lies in the author'].64

While Beale's comments about wonders are, as we shall see below, telling with regard to contemporary views about testimony, what is significant here is the way in which he, in common with Boyle and some of other Interregnum contemporaries, was calling for the

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63 R.S. Classified Papers III (f), f.1 quoted in Eamon, *Science and the Secrets of Nature*, p.331; Evelyn MS 45 'Elysium Britannicum', p.10 Quoted in Hunter, 'John Evelyn', p.95
popularisation of the most mundane yet at the same time useful remedies. Likewise, his idea of an experiment bears strong similarities to the sort of unpolished snippets of information present both in Hartlib’s Ephemerides and in the Legacie. For Beale, experiments were a series of short observations, extracts from a books, or news from the countryside; information that he would convey, but which others in this corporate enterprise would, if the need arose, work on. For while Beale believed that ‘experimental philosophy’ was indeed an advance on the ‘notionalle and phantastical’ character of ‘former discoveryse’, he also believed that ‘some Truthes are of such worth in their native splendour yt they have no neede of other dowrie.”

By setting himself up as a rural correspondent Beale was both attached to and divorced from the locus of natural philosophical activity. While on the one hand he believed that ‘rustical affairs’ should be dealt with on ‘joint and collegiate’ basis, on the other he believed that Boyle (whom he addressed with deference) should ‘oversee the main work’. When it came to the possibility of publishing his medical experiments (surely a crucial facet to the promotion of public utility), he, like Aubrey, was reluctant to do so. Perhaps Beale was cautious about over-publicising the contribution that unknown laymen such as Midford made to his work, as when he did publish his findings in the Philosophical Transactions he omitted any reference to him. Rather he framed his article in the contemporary language of spirits and principles, noting that ‘metalline spirits’ issuing from nearby mineral springs were the ‘secret cause, why some springs prove effectually Medical, when other Medicins do faile’ and suggesting that it was these ‘Invisible Principles’ that fermented and boiled the sap inside various trees. This said, there is nothing to suggest that Beale actually carried out any chemical testing. In fact, there is some similarity between his conclusions and Evelyn’s discussion of birchwater in Sylva,
Beale also had a dual-edged approach to the subject of weather prognostication. He was interested in this for a number of different reasons. First, it had a bearing on his plans for agricultural improvement; second, like many of his contemporaries, he linked epidemic and pestilential fevers in humans and animals to the condition of the air; and finally (though by no means least), he believed that local rustic beliefs about the weather could be based upon some ancient and true knowledge. As the following letter to Hartlib illustrates, all these concerns can be placed within the context of Beale’s interest in astral influences.

Wee see the Vigour of all things is chiefly in their spirits; & as substances or elements are more spiritual, soe they are more vigorous. Wee may call the Water & ayre as weake as wee please, but the late Winds have shewd us, What a force there is in the ayre...Our Counrtrey people have it allway es in their mouths. That there is some conjuring, when they see such stormes. And ought I know. They have it from old Tradition, & from true philosophy. For some such kinds of obedience, the deuill may be called the Prince of the ayre. And surely there is a strange spiritual vigour does agitate in the generation of all considerable substances, & may bee soe far discern’d in some Animals, & Vegetables, as to breede our iuste Wonder.  

In Beale’s opinion, the action of devils was, along with ‘the visite of Angells, or the possession of Satan...as naturall, as the gusts of Winde’. For, as he put it, ‘the Lord Almighty is as constant in Conferences with the spirite of Man, as in causing the winds to blow & the clouds to drop.’

The contrast between this approach and the approach he took after the Restoration was conspicuous. Whereas Aubrey (who was also motivated by a concern for public utility), maintained his interest in peasant prognostications and archetypal knowledge, Beale moved his attention away from these topics. Working from suggestions that had been

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70 Evelyn (pp.32-3) noted that birch trees possessed an ‘ocult’ and ‘wonderful virtue’ that allowed them to attract the ‘spirit of the world’. He based some of his findings on Boyle’s *Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy* (1663).
71 HP 51/23A-24A. John Beale to Samuel Hartlib September 27th 1658
72 HP 67/2/2a n.d. cited in Leslie, p.161; Beale’s view may have derived from his reading of Campanella; cf. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic*, pp.45-53
73 See for example Bodleian MS Aubrey 1, f.11v (‘Naturall History of Wiltshire’). Aubrey recorded a number of country proverbs that dealt with weather prognostications. Interesting
outlined by Bacon in his *Historia Ventorum* (1622) and discussed in 1650s by some members of the Hartlib Circle, Beale hoped to place his interest in astral influences on an empirical footing.\(^7^4\) Writing to Oldenburg in January 1672 to report ‘a strange Frost wch hath lately done much hurt about Bristol’, he expressed his wish that,

...some ingeneous Almanack Makers would (instead of ye conjectures of Weather to come) give a faythefull and judicious accompt of ye Weather, & other remarkable accidents, & phaenomena, as they fell out on the same day at ye Moneth of ye yeare foregoing. Hence we might in time examine upon sure ground how far ye positions of ye Planets, or other symtomes, or concomitants are indicative of Weathers. Probably we may have forewarnings of deaths, or famines, epidemickall diseases, contagions, & mortalities of man & beast, rot in sheepe &tc: & by their causes be instructed for remedies, & prevention...if such a Kalendar as is here proposed were happily begun, The Leading Example would draw on & grow to afford us better Light, then hath been hitherto assured by all the remains of Astrology from ye beginning of ye world to this day.\(^7^5\)

Beale’s approach fitted well with that of others such as Christopher Wren and Joshua Childrey who believed that judicial astrology, though mocked (along with the *virtuosi* themselves) by satirists such as Samuel Butler, and tainted by its earlier association with radical sectarianism and the unregulated printing of cheap almanacs, could be re-erected on a platform of Baconian induction.\(^7^6\) It appears from two letters that Beale sent Evelyn in 1669 that he hoped also to persuade those almanac-makers whom he saw as leaders in their field to adopt the new scientists’ views on the planets and their motions.\(^7^7\)

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\(^7^4\) Boyle in his ‘Of Celestial Influences or Effluviums in the Air’ (an essay which he wrote to Hartlib in the 1650s and which was published posthumously in 1691 as *History of the Air*) suggested that planets emit different sort of effluvia or particles that have chemical effects on the human body. In the same text he recommended the keeping of ‘an history or diary of the observations of the weather’. cf. Patrick Curry, *Prophecy and Power. Astrology in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989), pp. 61-64

\(^7^5\) R.S. B.I. Letter 58 Beale to Oldenburg January 13th 1673

\(^7^6\) Curry, pp.63-4. Such proposals may also have been designed to answer the long-standing criticism of judicial astrology as a form of profane divination. For criticisms such as these see Keith Thomas, *Religion and the Decline of Magic*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991); chapter 12, *pastsim*. See also Ray’s *Collection of English Proverbs. Digested into a Convenient Method for the Speedy Finding Any One Upon Occasion* (Cambridge, 1670), p.32. Ray hoped to correlate ‘Proverbs and Proverbial Observations belonging to Health, Diet and Physick’ with the researches of Thomas Sydenham.

Beale's letter to Oldenburg was well received and a version of it was published anonymously in the *Philosophical Transactions* a week later, albeit with the correction, in places, of Beale's original 'ingenious almanack makers' to the more neutral 'ingenious men'. Oldenburg also edited out the following remark from the beginning of Beale's letter,

'Though we are forbidden to temper, & ragge disputations in Religion, yet we are not forbidden Religiously to acknowledge God's Providence.'

Likewise he modified Beale's closing comment,

'But after all diligence, & contrivances, our only safeguard is to serve ye Ld who made & governed ye Stars, & all ye World.'

to read, '...our only safe guard is, to serve him that is the Supreme Governor and Disposer of all.'

**Georgics**

The Royal Society's Agricultural Committee was one of six committees set up between 1663 and 1665 to deal with matters of special interest to the Society. Though its membership was large (it numbered thirty-two, many of whom had been associates of Hartlib), the initial stimulus behind its establishment came from Beale, and as such it provides an indication of how receptive the Royal Society was to collecting the sort of information that he had outlined in his letters to Oldenburg and Boyle. Looking at the minutes of the Committee meetings we can see that initially there was enthusiasm for his suggestion that useful information should be extracted from texts and ordered into 'heads'. Both Parkinson's *Paradisi in Sole* (1629) and Hartlib's *Legacie* were proposed as starting points. Likewise, members of the Committee came forward with proposals for utilising local knowledge about cooking and herbal medicine. Sir John Hoskins, a friend of Aubrey's and a future president of the Royal Society, noted that lauror (a herb that grew by the sea) was a eaten in the 'Contry' as a common substitute for colewort, and Edward Waterhouse suggested that red sage when baked with rye-dough made a very

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78 *Philosophical Transactions*, no.90, 20th January 1672, pp.5138-42
79 Oldenburg did not edit out Beale's reference to the 'Learned [Joseph] Meade'.
80 Royal Society Domestic Manuscripts 5.63, f.1. The minutes and reports of the Agricultural Committee are reproduced in Hunter, *ETNS*, pp.105-114 and it is from here that my citations are taken.
good cure for dropsy. Related to this scheme was an attempt to allocate different counties and shires to the Committee members so that their ‘Observations and experience’ along with those of their ‘knowing friends’, could be put towards ‘a good History of Agriculture’. This in itself might be taken as a precursor to the queries that Robert Plot drew up prior to his ambitious project for an ‘Atlas’ which would detail the natural history of each English county. Looking further afield, similar plans were also voiced with regard to medical therapies that might be found amongst the indigenous populations of (amongst others) Brazil, Japan and the Indies. A Correspondence Committee was established in August 1664 to search for information in ‘Books of Voyages’ and Oldenburg compiled long and detailed lists of questions for travellers to these foreign parts.

Despite the early enthusiasm of some of its members, the Agricultural Committee failed to deliver the sort of co-operative response towards collecting and sorting information that Beale had hoped for. Promises to sift through texts were not kept and attendance at Committee meetings was poor. In at least one case potentially useful information was channelled into a different collaborative project. With the exception of the copious amount information that was sent to Plot by Aubrey, neither Plot nor Oldenburg received many replies to their questionnaires. This said, the failure of these innovations should not be taken to suggest that the Royal Society (and indeed Restoration élites in general) was uninterested in a more detailed engagement with lay therapeutics than that which had hitherto been offered by collecting of a private and provincial nature. With the benefit of hindsight we can see that they failed at the very point at which the Royal Society was struggling to find a means of gathering, sorting and presenting this sort of information.

81 Hunter, ETNS, p.106
82 Royal Society Classified Papers XIX.93, ‘Robert Plot Quaer’s to be propounded to the most ingenious of each county in my Travels through England’; BL Sloane MS 1039.
83 See for example Oldenburg Correspondence, Vol.8, pp.220-51, ‘Inquiries for Brasil’ and Royal Society Classified Papers XIX.42, ‘Questions about Japan’.
84 Dr William Croone never delivered his extracts from Hartlib’s Legacie.; Hunter, ETNS, p.98. Beale was absent from all the meetings, communicating instead by post.
85 See for example the annotations in Evelyn’s copy of Hartlib’s Legacie (1655 edition British Library press-mark EVE.A.78). This material was used in his Sylva.
Credibility and vulgarity

Though it was beset with problems, a solution to this task was found in the journal *Philosophical Transactions* which was established in 1665 under Oldenburg's editorship. The journal was integral to the way in which the Royal Society sought to portray itself publicly at a time when it was being attacked both by the College of Physicians and (in a manner that was perhaps unavoidable), by satirists and wits, a number of whom were undoubtedly jealous of the Society's ability to license its own works while they themselves were being chased by the censor. As such it is indicative of the way in which it tried to establish its credibility both generally at home and abroad, and, more specifically, in relation to medicine. Taken the other way round, the *Philosophical Transactions* also provide clues as to the sort of topics and styles of presentation that correspondents regarded as suitable when addressing Oldenburg and the Royal Society.

As we have already seen with Beale's researches into birchwater and weather prognostications, alterations did take place as information was published. Beale's references to the layman Midford were not published and his potentially divisive remarks about God's governance of the stars were replaced with a more recognisable and acceptable reference to providence. These changes are commensurate with patterns that have been identified by Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer. As they argue, in the aftermath of the turmoil of the Civil War the Royal Society sought to minimise the risks of conflict amongst its members by excluding the impolite and impolitic from its public discourse. It aimed to establish its credibility by focusing on the accounts of socially credible witnesses (a category that was taken to include Oxford professors but not Oxfordshire peasants), and conveying its findings in a politically neutral language of 'matters of fact'. While these changes certainly provided a contrast with the breakdown

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88 This issue is discussed in Roy Porter, 'The Early Royal Society and the Spread of Medical Knowledge' in Andrew Wear and Roger French (eds) *The Medical Revolution of the Seventeenth Century*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp.272-293
of hierarchy and decorum that had characterised the actions of sectarians who believed themselves to be inspired by divine revelation, in the main they connected well with concerns that had already existed since the early seventeenth century among urban élites, and which were slowly emerging in provincial society. As Richard Cust has suggested, these centred around issues of honour, reputation, and public recognition, and had their basis in a wider culture of civic humanism and Protestantism.\(^9\) They were pertinent to private disputes and legal cases, the latter being an area where testimony and the credibility of witnesses were also important in assessing supposed incidences of witchcraft and possession. Likewise, credibility and testimony were also established parts of both theological and natural philosophical approaches to the preternatural and the supernatural until well into the eighteenth century.\(^9\)

Seen in this light, Beale's attachment to 'vulgar matters' and his preference for unmediated 'Truthes' may be reasons why his approach to lay medicine was not adopted as public policy by the Royal Society. His desire to vulgarise medical knowledge by introducing 'the more received experiments of professed surgeons and physicians', may also have touched upon issues of plagiarism and demarcation.\(^9\) During the 1660s and '70s these issues were important both to Oldenburg, as he tried to defend the reputation of his journal, and to the Royal Society as it fought off criticism from the College of Physicians that it was impinging upon the College's territory. As a letter from the virtuoso Nathaniel Fairfax to Oldenburg suggests, 'the scandal raised on the Society as too friendly to Quacks' may, along with their associations with secrecy and avarice, have

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\(^9\) There is evidence to indicate that by 1670 Beale himself had moved away from this sort of suggestion; as having been asked by Oldenburg to referee an account of Cheshire cheese making he returned the work and advised non-publication on the grounds that the information already existed in Thomas Moffett's *Healths Improvement* (1655). *Oldenburg Correspondence*, Vol.6, p.560, Beale to Oldenburg March 15th 1670
been one reason why, in the main, the Royal Society was sceptical about the claims of panacea sellers such as Richard Matthews.94

Concerns about public credibility should not mask the fact that a great deal of information about lay medicine was collected. For while the boundary between private and public was permeable - the exchange of manuscripts constituting a more limited form of public space - it was possible for individuals to engage with natural philosophy while at the same time carrying on the kind of ad hoc collecting that we have seen above. This is illustrated in the case of John Ward (b.1629), a one-time member of the Oxford Philosophical 'Clubb' (many of whose members went on to join the Royal Society), and later, a country cleric and physician. As R.G. Frank has detailed, Ward's commonplace books, which span a thirty year period from the late 1640s until his death in 1681, show a radical change in tone as he moved between his "philosophical" friends (as he termed them) in London and Oxford, and his clerical and medical duties in the area around Stratford-upon-Avon. While in one domain he accumulated information relating to the chemical and physiological researches of Boyle, Willis, and Lower, performing many experiments himself, in the other he collected a wealth of medical and chemical therapies both from books (like John Symcots he valued sixteenth century writers such as Jean Riolan and Conrad Gesner) and his local patients.95 Likewise, Robert Hooke, whose scorn for 'the words or reports of some cosening workmen' is well known to historians, was, as his memoranda demonstrate, willing to collect and try medical recipes from virtually any source, whether credited (as was the case with the recipe for 'physick ale' he received from Archbishop Tillotson's wife), or not.96 As with Beale, Boyle, and (to a lesser extent) Oldenburg, personal health worries made even the most fastidious natural philosopher a willing partner in this sort of information exchange.97

94 Oldenburg Correspondence, Vol.5, p.504, Fairfax to Oldenburg April 30th 1669; Porter, 'Early Royal Society', pp.284-5, p.291
97 See for example Oldenburg Correspondence, Vol. 2, p.262 Oldenburg to Boyle October 20th 1664, 'I owe you many thanks for a medicine against violent fluxes...but give me leave to ask, whether the hot Cinnamon and nutmeg may not claime as great a share in the effect, as the cold Deadman's skull?'
In contrast to the situation which would emerge towards the beginning of the eighteenth century, these men when offered medical recipes (however base in origin) were unlikely to reject all as 'vulgar'. Perhaps because of their friendship, common interests, and similar ages, they took whatever they regarded as useful and left the rest. So while John Ray rejected as superstitious (i.e. contradictory to religious orthodoxy), Aubrey's collection of peasant prognostications, he was, at the same time, eager for him to publish both the work in which they were contained ('The Naturall historie of Wiltshire') and his *Adversaria Physica*, a commonplace book of peasants' proverbs, medical recipes and agricultural secrets.⁹⁸ When, in 1693, a similar suggestion was made by the antiquarian Edward Lhwyd, Aubrey responded by declaring that 'we must not be too bold in this censorious age'.⁹⁹ Likewise, the criticism that Aubrey received on account of his supposed credulity (Ray commented that he was 'a little too inclinable to credit strange relations') should not detract from the fact that many of his friends, including a number of the Royal Society's officers, were as curious about magical recipes and cures as he was.¹⁰⁰ Though cautious about the kind of debates that had 'giddied' the 'subtle schoolmen and fathers of the Romish Church', the Royal Society's president Sir John Hoskyns told Aubrey a number of stories about portents and dreams. James Garden, a professor of divinity at Aberdeen sent Aubrey stories about premonitions, fairies, Druids, and Rosicrucians with the proviso that he 'spared' his name from any publication; and Boyle's manuscripts suggest that he too was actively engaged in collecting information about witchcraft trials.¹⁰¹ Though these particular issues will be addressed in the following chapter it is worth noting here that in most cases it was not the possibility of these phenomena that concerned collectors, but the fear that if they credited an imposture they would give ammunition to the growing body of wits, sceptics, Deists and freethinkers who wished to destroy the very notion of supernatural intervention. Likewise, labels such as 'superstitious' and 'credulous', though taken by later commentators to refer to the poor and ill-educated, were, at this time, far more of a worry to those members of the literate élite who were keen to maintain their reputation.

⁹⁹ Aubrey to Lhwyd February 4th 1693 quoted in Hunter, *Aubrey*, p.227
¹⁰⁰ Bodleian MS Aubrey 1, f.13 Ray to Aubrey October 27th 1691; Hunter, *Aubrey*, pp.133-5
Robert Boyle and lay medicine

'I think a wise man may use a remedy that scarce any but a fool would have devised.' Robert Boyle

Presentation and the relationship an author established between himself and his subject matter were important to those who wished to publish their work while at the same time maintaining their reputation and credibility. Boyle achieved this through both his interest in experimental natural philosophy and the moral obligation he felt with regards to the provision of cheap and effective medicines for the poor. The latter, as we have seen in Chapter 3, was very much a product of his early thoughts on personal morality, ethics, and philanthropy, and should not be discounted when discussing his later attitudes towards lay medicine. Likewise, his natural philosophy was also influenced by a rejection of, if not Aristotelianism per se, then certainly philosophical dogmatism, in favour of a more open, empirical approach.

Perhaps to a lesser degree than Beale, Boyle also identified himself with the countryside and in particular his country estates at Stalbridge, Dorsetshire, and Munster, Ireland, where he spent long periods of time first during the mid-1640s and then again (following his return from the Continent) in the early 1650s. The countryside was, in his view, an area that was to be used productively and not for wasteful activities such as hunting and hare-coursing. He took an interest in the growing literature on animal husbandry and medicine, and it was in the footsteps of Gervase Markham and others 'not professedly Physicians' that he described 'Instances of divers cures upon brutes, and how these are applicable to men' in his *Some Considerations Touching the Usefulness of Experimental Naturall Philosophy,* (2nd edition 1664; orig. 1663), part 1, p.132

102 *Some Considerations Touching the Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy,* (2nd edition 1664; orig. 1663), part 1, p.132


Philosophy – a text which though published only in 1663, had been in preparation since the late 1650s. Here he commented that,

Physitians...might without disparagement to their profession, do it an usefull piece of Service, if they would be pleased to collect and digest all the approved Experiments of the Farriers, Graziers, Butchers, and the like which the Antients did not despise, but honoured with the Titles of Hippatrica and Veterinaria.

He observed how farriers treated tired horses by rubbing their gums with rope drawing blood but bringing almost instant relief. He himself injected animals with drugs as part of his work on the effects of the action of specifics and his researches into the claims made by, amongst others, Paracelsus and Van Helmont, that given the correct dosage, poisons could have therapeutic effects. Finally, he record how 'divers' of his friends had cured wounded horse 'by sticking the Nails that hurt them into Weapon-salves, which for that very use, among others, some of them are wont to carry about them in Silver Boxes.'

Though Boyle used the term 'approved Experiments' he gave litde credit to these nameless farriers and butchers. Rather he believed that it was only their 'Ignorance and credulousness...together with the liberty and meaness of those Creatures they physick, [that] gives them leave to venture on anything, having made them try upon Horses and Cattle, many such things as Physitians dare not try upon Men and Women.' While Boyle hoped that these activities (some of which he may have regarded as unavoidable) would help him to 'enrich or illustrate the way of curing humane bodies', it is worth noting that he also devoted considerable energy to finding experiments which could be conducted without unnecessary suffering on the part of the animals involved - pain of this sort being something which he regarded as blasphemy against the creation.

A similar combination of natural philosophical and ethical concerns existed with regard to Boyle's attitude towards laborants and unlearned or 'vulgar chymists'. Though Barbara Kaplan has argued that,

Boyle hoped to unite the university-trained physicians, whose expertise was based on book learning and logical analysis, and other classes of practitioners...

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105 Boyle, *Usefulness*, part 2, pp.232-5
106 Boyle, *Usefulness*, part 2, p.234
107 Oster, ""Beaume of Divinity"", p.168
(apothecaries, surgeons, empirics), as well as laymen, in efforts to improve the medical art.

This view has rightly been challenged by Lawrence Principe on grounds that it portrays Boyle’s attitude towards laymen in too positive a light. As Principe argues, Boyle, though keen to promote connections between ‘chymistry’ and medicine, was scornful and critical of ‘vulgar chymists’ (a group consisting of Paracelsian iatrochemists, laborants, and common textbook writers) and wanted to disassociate himself from their practices. This is particularly clear in *Sceptical Chymist* (1661) where Boyle remarked,

...I am far from being an enemy of the Chymists Art (though no friend to many that disgrace it by professing it,) and persuade them to believe me when I declare that I distinguish betwixt those chymists that are either cheats, or but laborants, and the true Adepti...I shall make bold to add, that we shall much undervalue Chymistry, if we imagine, that it cannot teach us things far more useful, not only to Physick but to Philosophy, than those that are hitherto known to vulgar chymists.

Likewise, writing ten years later in the final part of *Usefulness* (1671) - a text which was in part a political exercise that came on the back of Sprat’s *History* and was intended to bolster the philosophical credentials of the experimental method - Boyle again sought to separate the activities of the vulgar from those of true chymists. He complained about the deficiencies of ‘mere chymists’, their ‘ill fortune to be distrusted by the generality of men’, and their inability to give ‘a clear and full account of their practices’ – this last deficiency being put down to an overfamiliarity with their own working processes.

However, labourers and artisans, as was the case with farriers and butchers, did, as a result of their work, have access to therapies and materials which could not be found in books, but which could, in Boyle’s opinion, be utilised by physicians and the poor. As he noted,

...among masons and bricklayers, we most commonly meet with quicklime; whose bare infusion in common water...is of itself a good medicine in divers

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109 Robert Boyle, *The Sceptical Chymist* (2nd ed. 1680), ‘Preface Introductory’, Sig. A4r. Notable here for anyone who still wishes to see Boyle as ‘the father of chemistry’ is the way in which he identified himself with the ‘true Adepti’.

cases, and experience has persuaded me, may be made the basis of several good remedies, both inward and outward.

If it was not 'somewhat disagreeable to the stomach', the linseed oil used by varnishers, painters and 'colour-sellers', 'would be perhaps preferable for its anti-nephritic virtue to the most pompous compositions of the shops, and some of the celebrated arcana of the (vulgar) chymists.'

Artisans and mechanics, though lacking in education and experimental skills, were also capable to assisting the 'naturalist' (or so Boyle styled himself in ways that will be discussed below), by providing him with both better equipment, most notably in the form of the heating vessels and furnaces that were central to chemical work, and better and cheaper methods of distillation, calcination and amalgamation.

According to Boyle, artisans might also assist the naturalist in his experimental work, though here in particular he recommended that this take place either at the naturalist's laboratory or, at the very least, under the naturalist's supervision. In this way the untrained laymen would be moved into the naturalist's experimental space and control.

Though based partly on his interest in Baconianism, Boyle's attitude towards artisans and mechanics also owed much to his moral and ethical concerns. These, as we have noted above, were formed in the 1640s and '50s in texts such as his Aretology and were ongoing throughout his life. In common with Beale he rejected many of the élite pursuits that concerned men such as Evelyn, complaining about 'mere scholars' who 'are not wont to be acquainted enough with nature and trades.' Likewise, wealthy virtuosi whose livelihoods were not at stake were largely incapable of the kind of diligence and hard work that he encountered in his contacts with artisans and mechanics.

Another group that Boyle regarded as possible providers of remedies and empirical information were the indigenous peoples of China, Japan, the East Indies, and the Americas. Rather than seeing these peoples as barbarians (an attitude which he

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112 Boyle, Usefulness, pp.160-66. He cited the Dutch inventor Cornelius Drebbel (1572-1633). Drebbel's work had also been an influence on Worsley and Clodius.
114 That the Goods of Mankind may be much Increased the Naturalist's Insight into Trades in Boyle, Works, Vol.3, p.443 cited in Oster, 'The Scholar and the Craftsman Revistited', p.267
despised), he regarded both them and their medicines as 'ingenious'. He supported his argument by referring to the work of Prosper Alpinus (1553-1617), Jacobus Bontius (1592-1621), and Gulielmus Piso (1611-78) - each author having detailed a large number of drugs that had been obtained from the native populations of Egypt, India and Brazil respectively. Likewise he cited William Harvey's opinion that,

no people is so barbaric which has, either accidentally or forced by inevitable necessity, contributed something to the general well being which has been hidden from other more cultivated nations.

Elsewhere, Boyle's interest in foreign remedies could be supported by a burgeoning literature detailing the medical activities of the Jesuits in China and the Americas, and, (though Boyle did not mention it in his text), the fear that the English, in contrast to other countries, would miss out on valuable medical secrets. These fears could only have been accentuated by the existing climate of war (with the Dutch) and mercantile competition, and by suspicions about Jesuitism and Catholicism in general.

In common with his view of other lay practitioners, Boyle believed the lack of theoretical knowledge amongst indigenous peoples to be a great advantage. Unencumbered by the dogmas of Aristotle and Galen (dogmas which had led European physicians to use complex and ineffective compounds), indigenous people were far more likely to use 'specificks' - that is, remedies made up from a single herb or chemical and directed towards a particular disease or ailment. For, as he put it,

115 For Boyle's missionary and evangelical work see Hunter, Robert Boyle by himself and with his Friends., p.xxx and p.lxx
116 Prosper Alpinus, De Medicina Aegiptorum, (Paris, 1645), Jacobus Bontius, De Medicina Indorum, (Lugduni Batavorum, 1642), Gulielmus Piso, De Medicina Brasiliensi, (Amsterdam, 1648); Hunter, ETNS, p.118, notes that texts by Piso and Bontius were recommended to the Correspondence Committee in August 1664.
117 Boyle, Usefulness, part 2, p.222. Boyle cited Harvey's Generation of Animals, 'Nulla gens tam barbara est quae non aut fortuito, aut inevitabili quaedam necessitate coacta aliquid in usum communem adiuvererit quod Nationes alias humaniores latuit'.
118 See for example Beale to Boyle July 30th 1666 in Boyle, Works, Vol. 6, pp.409-12. Beale expressed his fear that the Jesuits had obtained medical knowledge with which they had 'infatuated the world'. Despite ongoing conflicts between the English and the Dutch, the Royal Society did, in 1681, receive information on Japanese medical lore from a Dutchman working for the Dutch East India Company, Willem Ten Rhijn (see Royal Society Classified Papers XIX.95). Ten Rhijn described acupuncture and moxibustion (burning plant matter on the surface of a wound). Though his work was published in the Philosophical Transactions he failed (perhaps because of conservative elements within the Royal Society) to gain any further support for his work. On this incident see Harold J. Cook, Trials of an Ordinary Doctor: Joannes Groenewelt in Seventeenth-Century London, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), p.125
...such persons, being wont, for want of skil in Physick, & particularly the Art of Mixing Simple[s], and in that of varying their Remedies according to Circumstances do almost wholly rely upon specificks; whose Virtue, from their practice, may be sometimes better gathered than from that of skilful Physicians, in regard that those empiricks [sic] (besides that they assist not with any skill in the Methodus medendi the virtues of their remedies) are wont, for the Reason newly mention’d to try obstinately and to the uttermost, the effects of their few specificks. And the Nature of their Medicine may be better known in regard they are not wont to blend them as Learned men but often doe.\textsuperscript{119}

Simples were more efficient at curing particular diseases, because, as he described in the Usefulnesses, their ‘Qualities’ were ‘unheeded’ by the presence of other corpuscles. In contrast to the complex mixture of ingredients that went into the treacales that were so beloved of some Renaissance writers, Boyle believed that simples would not clog and temper one another in the way that happened when acids and ‘alcalizate’ salts mixed. Simples did not require expensive ingredients such as gems, bezoar stone, and gold leaf, and (again because one sort of corpuscle was being used) they were easier to predict in their results. Chemical simples were both cheaper (by virtue of the small doses required) and better at treating chronic illnesses than ‘Galenicals’. And while Boyle saw health and not cost as the end of the ‘Art of Physick’, he did encourage practitioners to consider issues of ‘Equity’ and ‘Charity’ when dealing with those ‘not rich’.\textsuperscript{120}

In common with others who had ‘never studied the Art of [physic] in schools or Books’, indigenous peoples were likely to try remedies ‘which though perhaps prejudicial, or even fatal to those on whom they are tried may afford very good Hints to a Learned and Judicious Observer.’ Whilst their medical practice offered the opportunity of finding ‘lucky’ cures (he cited tobacco juice as an example), it also made them ideal subjects for the ‘naturalist’. This figure, with whom Boyle identified himself at the beginning of the Usefulnesses, would learn both from their ‘errors’ and from the ‘lame and unlearned Observations and Practice of such illiterate Persons as Gardeners, Plowmen, and Milkmaids.’ The ‘knowing naturalist’ would act as a ‘meliorating influence’ thereby making their crude experience useful to physicians.\textsuperscript{121}

\textsuperscript{119} Boyle, \textit{Usefulnesses}, part 2, p.219
\textsuperscript{120} Boyle, \textit{Usefulnesses}, part 2, p.131. Boyle specifically attacked the work of Pietro-Andrea Mattioli (1500-77); \textit{ibid.}, p.128
\textsuperscript{121} Boyle, \textit{Usefulnesses}, part 2, p.219; \textit{ibid.}, pp.4-6
Boyle's aim here was not to 'subvert the methodus medendi of Sober physicians' by privileging the work of 'venturous Empericks', but to highlight the contribution that natural philosophy, and therefore the work of non-professionals, could make to the practice of medicine, both in terms of physiology (the first part of *Usefulnesse* being used to highlight the work of the Oxford experimenters) and chemistry. The 'skilful Naturalist especially if a good Chymist' could help the physician to discover the 'Qualities of Medicines', add new minerals and remedies, and bring down the cost of treatment. His exemplars were Bacon (whom he lauded for his willingness to deal both with the lofty and with the mundane), Van Helmont (for his chemical knowledge), and the 'Judicious' Celsus — the representing the classical emphasis on empiricism as a necessary adjunct to the ratio of theoretical medicine.\(^{122}\)

Boyle wrote at greater length about the value of medicinal simples in two texts: *Of the Reconcileableness of Specifick Medicines to the Corpuscular Philosophy* (1685) and (annexed to it), *The Advantages of the Use of Simple Medicines proposed by Way of Invitation to it*. While in the second of these texts Boyle repeated the argument from *Usefulnesse* that specifics were cheaper and easier to prepare than 'pompous compositions', in the first he attempted to apply his interest in corpuscularianism to the problem of explaining how they worked.\(^ {123}\) He noted how, unlike compound drugs where many different particles or corpuscles interfered with one another, specifics consisted of only one sort of corpuscle, the shape and size of which accounted for its efficacy when matched to the appropriate disease. As corpuscles of an acidic quality dispelled diseases that produced alkali matter, so alkali corpuscles acted against the 'cutting or prickling' quality of acids. This theory could also be used to explain why some remedies were best suited to particular organs and body parts — a prospect which Boyle recognised as being contrary to the Galenic practice of treating the body as a whole — and why amulets (which emitted 'Effluviums' and 'Magentical Corpuscles') could be effective at treating internal diseases.\(^ {124}\)

This last issue had been dealt with by Boyle in the *Usefulnesse* and is just one example of the way in which his views on the nature of matter — views that had developed out of his long study of both classical texts such as Galen and the more recent writings of (amongst

\(^ {122}\) Boyle, *Usefulness*, part 2, p.291; *ibid.*, p.11. Boyle noted that the 'venturousness' of Fioravanti in areas such as surgery and therapeutics was to be 'credited but not imitated.'

others) Paracelsus, Descartes, Van Helmont, Gassendi, and Digby – fed into his medical work. As with his writings on the 'spring of the air' and 'cosmical qualities', Boyle believed that the action of amulets, together with that of the 'weapon-salve' and sympathetic cures in general, could be accommodated within the framework of his mechanical philosophy. The only factor that changed here, as with all forms of matter, was the subtlety and the diffusion of the corporeal agents involved. In this regard, Boyle had moved away both from the scholastic distinction between 'manifest qualities' (that is qualities that could be apprehended by the senses), and 'occult' qualities, and, with it, from the charge that he was dealing with a secret, hidden, 'Catholic' world. Likewise, the promotion of his work as an example of the experimental method in which he cited only those 'phenomena of which they [the authors] supposed they have given us very satisfactory accounts', may have kept him from accusations of dogmatism and radicalism.

His sources included Bacon, who had used 'transplantation or some other Magnetic way' to cure himself of warts, and Harvey, who had cured tumours with the hand of a man who had died of a lingering disease. According to Boyle, these cures were 'safe and innocent' for 'if they be real they may doe much good, if they prove fictions they can do no harm.' They were used both by the 'easie and superstitious' and by 'diverse Eminent Physicians'. Boyle combined material from learned authorities with a number of medical cases involving wise women and other popular practitioners. He cited an example from the Dutch physician Henri de Heer (a source for much of the information in Usefulness) in which an incontinent woman had been 'perfeclly help'd by wearing, as a Gypsie had taught, a litde Bag hung about her neck, containing the powder made of a live Toad burnt in a new Pot.' Instead of following de Heer and attributing the cure to

124 Boyle, Of the Reconcileableness of Specifick Medicines to the Corpuscular Philosophy (1685), p.5; ibid., p.72; ibid., pp.46-7
125 Boyle, Usefulness, part 2, pp.217-25. In this case Boyle cited Galen's De Simplicium Medicamentum and the example he gave of a peony root being used as an amulet. Other sources for Boyle's work on 'invisible objects' included his discussions with Nathaniel Highmore and his reading of Aristotle, Epicurus, and Harvey. On this point see Kaplan, pp.35-7
127 Boyle, Usefulness, part 1, p.66. A similar approach was taken by Glanvill in his account of the weapon-salve. See The Vanity of Dogmatizing: Or Confidence in Opinions. Manifested in a Discourse of the Shortness and Uncertainty of Our Knowledge, (1661), pp.207-8
witchcraft or 'some supernatural cause', Boyle suggested that the powder had emitted 'subtle effluvia' which had deprived the disease of its qualities. Though Boyle had here provided what was, in his words, a 'strange, yet but natural' explanation, there is no sense in which reason had triumphed over superstition.\(^{129}\) In fact, taken as a whole, his writings on effluvia and other sorts of emanation, though clearly of bearing on his medical work, were of far greater importance to debates between learned theologians. Here, in particular, his treatment of occult qualities in terms secondary causes was used to sustain a voluntarist position against the necessitarianism of the Cambridge Platonists Henry More and Ralph Cudworth.\(^{130}\)

Boyle included a large number of other medical recipes in the *Usefulness*. While some of these came from sources such as Bontius and Piso (he noted for example that the 'garapa' distilled by some Brasilian Indians was an excellent astringent), others such as the 'spirit of soot' came from closer to home, from empirics and oculists. In keeping with patterns that have been described in the previous chapter, Boyle insisted that these transactions be based either on an exchange of secrets or on cash payment.\(^{131}\) While *Ensis venenatis*, the copper compound that he had worked on with Starkey (cited here as a nameless but 'Industrious Chymist') was recommended as a medicine for the poor, a drink made from fermented apples and pears by 'a learned divine' (surely Beale) was suggested for its positive effect on human longevity.\(^{132}\) Though Boyle maintained the anonymity of most of his sources — using to good effect the genre of a dialogue (in this case with Pyrophilius, the lover of fire) — one of his aims was to bring credibility to some seemingly disgusting remedies by showing first how, in their basic state, they had been used successfully by 'Persons of Quality', and second, how their effectiveness could be

\(^{128}\) Boyle, *Usefulness*, part 2, p.226
\(^{130}\) According to Boyle (cited in Henry, p.354), God had 'so fram'd things at first that, there can seldom or never need extraordinary Interposition of his power'. Necessitarians believed, in contrast, that God was continually intervening. The debate between Boyle and More came to a head in 1671 over the question of vacuum, the Cambridge Platonist advocating an openly spiritualist or 'plastick' explanation for the vacuum that existed between two plates whilst Boyle opted for a more tentative mechanical explanation. Beale, himself a neo-Platonist and friend of More's, supported Boyle (*Oldenburg Correspondence*, Vol.8, pp.119-20, Beale to Oldenburg 24th June 1671); cf. John Henry, 'Henry More versus Robert Boyle: The Spirit of Nature and the Nature of Providence', in Sarah Hutton (ed.), *Henry More (1614-1687): Tercentenary Studies*, (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1990), pp.55-75
\(^{131}\) Boyle, *Usefulness*, part 2, p.90. Other medical drinks such as rice wine were taken from the Dutchman J.L. Linschoten's *Discours of Voyages into ye East and West Indies*, (1598); *ibid.*, pp.141-5
\(^{132}\) Boyle, *Usefulness*, part 2, pp.153-4; *ibid.*, p.89
Chapter 4

extended through chemical processing, the details of which he provided in an appendix to the second part of the text. 'Man's Urine', a cure 'not disdained by a Person of great Quality and Beauty', could be reduced to its 'spirit' and 'volatile salts' and distributed to country people, many of whom lived without the attentions of a learned physician. Likewise, human blood though 'fetid' and the subject of a number of popular and learned errors (some of which Boyle tried to dispel), could be reduced to its volatile spirit, thereby becoming an effective remedy.¹³³

Again, Boyle's intention in providing these instructions was not to undermine the position of 'great Physicians or Chymists', but to help 'persons of quality' and charity produce safe chemical medicine with which they could treat themselves or the poor. He acknowledged that 'a competent measure of knowledge is absolutely necessary to a practiser of Physick'. He defended his decision to communicate medical information by citing the example set by learned physicians such as Lazare Rivière, and by noting that he, though not a 'profess'd Physician' had sought 'the Testimony of skilful men' whenever he had been unsure of a subject. Above all, Boyle defended his position on moral grounds. Collecting and 'divulging' remedies was a way 'by which a Man may really oblige Man-kind, and relieve more distressed Persons, than if he built an Hospital' — this last comment perhaps being a criticism of those who thought that charity ended with gifts of money. His work was a backlash against an age of 'destructive valour' where 'T is a much more fashionable Practice in young Gentlemen, to kill men, than to cure them', and a means of confirming his own piety. Regardless of Calvinist orthodoxy and professional opposition, the man who healed the sick was following in the footsteps of Christ.¹³⁴

Though Boyle continued to collect medical recipes and develop his medical ideas after the publication of Usefulness, he did not publish any of this material until the mid-1680s. His silence during this period may be attributed both to external factors and to Boyle's very particular way of demonstrating dissatisfaction and unease. As Hunter has detailed,

¹³³ Boyle, Usefulness, part 2, p.143; ibid., p.332 and p.322. Boyle rejected the suggestion made by Burgravius (a follower of Paracelsus) that a 'lamp of life' containing a sample of a patient's blood sample could indicate that patient's condition at a distance. He developed his ideas on the medical uses of blood in Memoirs for the Natural History of Humane Blood, Especially that Liquor (1684).

¹³⁴ Boyle, Usefulness, part 2, pp.294-98. Rivière's Observationes Medicae, (1646), were, as we have seen in Chapter 2, a source of John Symcotts' medical knowledge. For Biblical justifications for his position Boyle cited Acts 10:38 and Matthew 4:24.
the publication of Boyle's text coincided with a period of conflict both between the Royal Society and the College of Physicians, and between the College of Physicians and the Society of Apothecaries, over issues such as professional authority (and with it Royal patronage), and the role of chemistry and experimentalism in medicine.\textsuperscript{135} Notwithstanding the \textit{via media} that Boyle had tried to take, his work was misused by each group in ways that may have led him to stop publishing until he felt that he was in a position to do so; though here it is notable that his decision to start publishing again the in 1680s coincided with a period of conflict between the College of Physicians and the learned but unlicensed Dutch practitioner Johannes Groenevelt – the latter having produced a book of medical self-help.\textsuperscript{136}

Rather than being cowed by the criticisms that \textit{Usefulnesse} received from Galenists on account of its contents and its perceived worth to their opponents, Boyle channelled his unease about the conservatism and the dangers of their practice into a series of unpublished manuscripts detailing his 'Considerations & Doubts Touching the Vulgar Method of Physick'. As with other instances in which Boyle was faced with difficult questions of conscience, these papers acted as a medium on which he could gather his private thoughts. If anything, they show that in the \textit{Usefulnesse} he was gentler in his approach than he might have wished to be.\textsuperscript{137}

For Boyle, publishing medical therapies represented a boundary between an essentially private world in which he collected recipes and laid down his thoughts, and a public world that contained the threat of censure on grounds of plagiarism and credulity. Both issues may have made him reluctant to publish in the 1670s and early 1680s.\textsuperscript{138} Certainly when he did come to publish on this subject – first in \textit{Some Receipts of Medicines For the Most Part Parable Sent to A Friend in America} (1688) and then in the posthumous \textit{Medicinal Experiments, or a Collection of Choice and Safe Remedies, for the most Part Simple, and Easily Prepared: Very Useful in Families, and Fitted for the Service of Country People} (1692), his


\textsuperscript{136} Cook, \textit{Trials of an Ordinary Doctor}, chapter 6, \textit{passim}. The text in question was \textit{The Oracle for the Sick}, (1685).

\textsuperscript{137} Both this document (Royal Society Boyle Papers 18, ff.133-4) and a number of associated fragments are reprinted in Hunter, ‘Boyle versus the Galenists’, pp.350-61; \textit{ibid.}, p.349

\textsuperscript{138} Hunter, ‘Reluctant Philanthropist’, pp. 260-65
attitude was apologetic. In the latter text he stated, 'I do not pretend that these should play the part both of medicines and physicians too; but only that they may be usefully employed by one, that like you, knows how to administer them discreetly' — his intention being here, as with the 1688 text, that the recipes be dispensed by charitable churchmen and gentlefolk. Recognising that he had received some of his recipes from 'empiricks, or unlearned persons', he devised a complex scheme of grading them according to their quality and the number of times that they had been tried. He marked a recipe with an 'A' to signify that it had been tried or recommended to him by a 'physician, or other credible person'; with a 'B' to suggest a 'second or inferior sort'; and with a 'C', to indicate that the remedy was of the 'the lowest order, though good enough not to be despised' — this last group being included on the basis that ingredients for the best recipes might not always be available. Recipes were also marked with a '1' to indicate that a single trial had taken place, '+' for two or three trials, and '*' for more.

This last system, which was abandoned after the first (1692) edition of *Medicinal Experiments*, went hand in hand with the adoption of a looser, more abbreviated style of presentation than that found in his earlier natural philosophical work. As he remarked in *Experimenta & Observationes Physicae* (1691), a text which was to have highlighted the importance of natural philosophy for subjects such as medicine,

I expect that you should think it somewhat strange, to find many of the following experiments set down much less circumstantially, than those that are mentioned in the physico-mechanical experiments touching the air...But on this occasion give me leave to represent to you, that the nature of divers former experiments, especially chemical one, and my aims in mentioning them being considered, it seemed not requisite they should be more fully treated of...¹⁴⁰

*Medicinal Experiments* was presented in a style not dissimilar to that found in many other printed books of recipes, commonplaces, secrets and notable things. Even before the executors of Boyle's will had ransacked his papers for therapies that could be published (against his stated intention) in further editions, his recipes were peppered with words such as 'approved', 'experienced', 'rare' and 'choice'. Cures involving human excrement, urine, and horse-dung are all ranked 'class A'.¹⁴¹ By the second edition

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¹⁴⁰ Boyle, *Works*, Vol. 5, p.566. Boyle noted that 'sickness, visits, business, and inevitable avocations' had also been responsible for the 'piece-meal' state of the text.
cures involving the body parts of hanged villains was included, as were 'magnetical' cures and 'homely, but not ineffectual' medicines for jaundice, tooth-ache, 'dysentrical fluxes' and colic. Vulgarity was treated as a selling point for an 'approved remedy for a Cold' and a 'great medicine of a famous Empirick' was advertised as a cure for the King's Evil.\textsuperscript{142}

Boyle's \textit{Medicinal Experiments} was vulgarised, plagiarised, and popularised, in a manner common both to other early modern book of remedies and secrets. Like Nicholas Culpeper's \textit{Herbal} or Thomas Lupton's \textit{Thousand Notable Things}, it went through multiple editions in the eighteenth century, pieces were copied out of curiosity and practical need, and sections were printed both in Nathaniel Wanley's encyclopaedic \textit{Wonders of the Little World} and in John Dunton's journal, \textit{The Athenian Gazette}. The approach taken by the Boyle's executor John Wall was particularly notable.\textsuperscript{143} Writing in the preface to the third edition of \textit{Medicinal Experiments} (1696) he remarked,

\begin{quote}
The Hon. ROBERT BOYLE, Esq; deceased, hath gratified the whole race of mankind by his public labours. The world may be divided into the learned and unlearned part thereof. The former he much obliged by his elaborate discourses upon several subjects; the latter, which are far more numerous, he hath condescended also to oblige, by consulting their health in the ensuing receipts. For, whereas the ordinary and inferior sort of men either have not the ability (by reason of the tenuity of their estates) to reward physicians, or, by reason of the remoteness of their habitations, have not opportunity to consult them; here they have remedies provided to their hands, and almost at their own doors; some of which the learned collector had experience of himself; and others were recommended to him by credible persons, who had experienced their benefit in themselves or their friends.\textsuperscript{144}
\end{quote}

Regardless of the fact that it was probably the learned as much as the unlearned who read this text, Boyle, the good Christian, and, as he would become, 'man of science', had deigned to educate the vulgar.

\textbf{Natural history and antiquarianism}

\textsuperscript{142}Boyle, \textit{Works}, Vol. 5, p.338 and p.353

\textsuperscript{143}The move towards the popularisation had begun even after the publication of \textit{Usefulness}. See for example Wanley's \textit{Wonders of the Little World}, (1678), p.95; Gilbert D. MacEwen, \textit{The Oracle of the Coffee House}. \textit{John Dunton's Athenian Mercury}, (San Marino, California: Huntington Library, 1972), p.130
While Boyle's medical activities represent one way in which an educated gentleman of high social standing might engage with the medical culture of the layman it was by no means the only way in which this could happen. The activities of natural historians and antiquarians also brought them into regular contact with lay medical ideas, in terms both of therapeutics and related areas of interest such as the effect of an environment on health, weather phenomena, and epidemic disease. Here in particular, authors advertised their work as a means of educating the vulgar both by suggesting natural explanations for seemingly supernatural events and, conversely, by arguing for the reality of divine providence in areas where country people held animist beliefs - the latter also being perceived as a necessary counter to any overtly mechanist cosmology.

As Joshua Childrey noted in the preface to *Britannia Baconica*, a text which dealt with (amongst other things) weather prognostications, peasants' diet, medicinal wells, and instances of extreme longevity,

> First, this Book is intended for the use of the Vulgar, to teach them not to misbelieve or condemn for untruths all that seemes strange, and above their wit to give reason for, who are the least able of men to do it. For here they may read as strange things, (and yet true) as any of those reported, or written by travellers; and reform their judgements into so much charity, as to think, that many Travellers do not make so much use of their Authority to lye, as they might.

His attitude to travellers' tales was based largely on the reputation of each individual author and on the success that he had in corroborating their accounts with other written texts. While the story that a well in Berkshire boiled with blood in the year 1100 was 'not incredible, though very strange; because we read of several the like stories touching Fountains in other Countrieys, in Authors of good credit', the 'relations of [John] Mandevile [sic], and other credulous Writers' were to be treated with caution as their 'many truths' were mixed in with 'fables and falsehoods'. In the main Childrey seems to have based his work on that of his near contemporaries Richard Carew (whose *Survey of Cornwall* (1602) he plundered for information on the medicinal use of garlic by rustics),

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145 On this point see Walsham, *Providence in Early Modern England*, pp.23-5

146 Joshua Childrey, *Britannia Baconica: Or, Natural Rarities of England, Scotland, & Wales... Methodically Digested; and the Causes of Many of them Philosophically Attempted*, (1660), sig. A6v

Chapter 4

and William Camden, who, by the mid seventeenth century had achieved near iconic status among English natural historians and antiquarians.

Scholars working in these areas attempted to position themselves in ways that emphasised the distance between their own practices and those they were surveying. This distance was both social in the sense that they were dealing (through the mediation of pious churchmen and other sober and credible witnesses) with the poor and the ill-educated; and historical in that 'superstitious' practices were presented as evidence of customs or beliefs that were no longer current in élite society. The gap between writer and subject was also religious in the sense that these superstitious practices could be taken to represent the remnants of vulgarised pagan or Catholic beliefs, and epistemological in that some writers offered secondary causes as explanations for events that were otherwise seen as supernatural or inexplicable.

These features can be seen in Plot’s natural histories of Staffordshire and Oxfordshire which, as Hunter notes, were intended both to supplement existing “Civil and Geographical Historys” (of the sort that had been produced by Camden and Dugdale), and to popularise the practice of natural history itself, though only amongst the landed and the wealthy. Both his finished work (which was published in expensive folio volumes) and the prospectus that he sent out beforehand, were addressed to these groups.148 He sought to please his patrons by including engravings of their estates and their coats of arms in his text, and by praising them as 'learned and observing'.149 He also aimed to ingratiate himself at court by dedicating his works to Charles II and James II respectively, and by framing his description of bees in terms of monarchical government.150 Finally, he included in his text poems by Thomas Lane and James Norris in which he Plot was lauded as learned and heroic (a latter day Aethicus151 or Drake). He was writing, according to the title of his prospectus, as an English Pliny – a testament to the high regard in which Pliny (for all his credulity) was held.152

148 Hunter, Aubrey, p.70
149 Robert Plot, The Natural History of Stafford-shire, (Oxford, 1686), p.81. The comment was made in relation to Walter Chetwynd. Plot began his work on Staffordshire at Chetwynd’s invitation.
151 Aethicus of Istria, author of Cosmographia (3rd or 4th century A.D.)
152 Hunter, Aubrey, p.101, fn.2, notes Plot’s conscious use of Pliny’s subject divisions.
Plot’s approach to lay medical culture was, on the whole, negative. Regardless of the similarities that may have existed between the practices and beliefs of rustics and those of élites, Plot emphasised the differences. Whereas Evelyn had ascribed the curative powers of certain trees to ‘the spirit of the world’, Plot in his description of the village of Biddulph relegated a similar belief in the ability of a local tree to cure ‘unaccountable swellings’ in cattle to the realm of ‘superstitious custom’. As far as he was concerned, a feasible explanation for the cure could be found in the works of Aristotle and Dioscorides. However, when it came to explaining the sympathetic pains that he claimed to exist between pregnant women and their husbands he dismissed the sceptical attitude of the physician James Primrose, insisting that he had received accounts from ‘sober men, who know well how to distinguish the manner of the pangs, and the circumstances of them’ and stating his opinion that it was ‘difficult not to err concerning such mysteries of Nature.’ Such an approach was no doubt designed to endear him to others at the Royal Society who were trumpeting the virtues of a non-dogmatic approach to natural philosophy. As with Childrey, he was eager to replace peasant superstitions with explanations involving secondary causes (he noted for example that ‘more natural causes’ might be given for corn-circles), while at the same time emphasising the importance of divine providence. Here in particular, his proclaimed desire to record only ‘the more accurate Observations of Others’ fell apart as he detailed incidents that had been widely reported in popular broadsheets and pamphlets; his description of the failed hanging of Anne Green being designed to show how, in the case of this innocent woman, God had asserted his ‘just Providence’.

Plot relied heavily both on the writings of Pliny and Bacon, and on older Hippocratic theories of disease in his attempts explain the connections between the local environment and the health of men and animals. Though ‘rural observers’ were aware

153 Plot, Staffordshire, p.222
154 Plot, Oxfordshire, pp.193-4
156 Plot, Oxfordshire, p.88; ibid., pp.197-99; see for example, W. Burdet, *A Wonder of Wonders. Being a Faithful Narrative and True Relation of one Anne Green ... who ... was Condemned ... and Hanged ... in Oxford*, (1650)
157 For a general overview of this trend see Mary Dobson, *Contours of Death and Disease in Early Modern England*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), Chapter 1, passim
that simple connections existed between local topography and the incidence of epidemic
disease, their knowledge was often crude and flawed. Common opinion was not to be
trusted. As Plot noted in the case of a lake situated in a Staffordshire peat-pit,

> It be confindenty reported that no cattle will drink of it, no bird light on it, or fly
> over it; all of which are as false as it is bottomlesse...my Horse also drinking when I
> was there as freely of it as I ever saw Him at any other place.

Even where men and animals appeared to enjoy good health and long lives this was to be
attributed to divine providence rather than any ingenuity on their part. It was, argued
Plot, the conditions that men and animals lived in that was to be observed, verified (a
difficult task in the case of supposed longevity), and recorded. Likewise, country
people, retaining the memory of a holy site, might know of a nearby healing spring, but
a proper cure would in each case require a ‘skillful Physician, to prepare the body before
hand, direct the use of the waters, and [know] how to order the body after drinking or
bathing. Even where a water appeared to be a panacea, a corpuscular understanding of
its action would be needed if it was to be fully exploited. Here Plot linked his
topographical work both to his own chemical researches and, using language that verged
on the obsequious, the work of other prominent physiologists such as Thomas Willis
and John Mayow.

Though country people could not provide him with finished knowledge the observations
of the most skilful might at least serve as the starting point for further natural
philosophical work. Like Beale he pushed for an elevation in the status of agriculture
and its incorporation within the sphere of learning. In Plot’s opinion such a move was
‘usefull and necessary to a Common Wealth’ both in terms of its physical health and its
status in relation to other countries. As such his work addressed both his own desire
for promotion (he was made professor of chemistry at Oxford in 1683) and a wider,
interest in economic improvement and trade. As he put it relation to Staffordshire, here

158 Plot, Stafford-shire, p.33
159 Plot, Stafford-shire, p.43
160 See for example R.S. L.B.C.4. p.338 Martin Lister to Oldenburg York March 17th 1671
Concerning some very aged persons in the North of England. Lister noted ‘I am confident
many Scores might be found, of the Age of 100 Years amongst these northern mountains,
but it is troublesome to verify, & you must take those Reports, as authentick, and Exact, but
yet credible enough to make ye Matter worth Examination.’
161 Plot, Stafford-shire, pp.103-6
162 Plot, Stafford-shire, p.339. Like Beale, Plot took his line from Columella.
was 'a Land that can subsist of itself without the help, either of any domestick, or forraign Countries, as any in the Kingdom'.

Lay medicine and the historical past

While collecting information about topography and natural history undoubtedly served utilitarian purposes, it also fed an interest in antiquarianism and the historical past. These subjects were part of an older humanistic tradition that was neither diminished by the new science nor by any attempt to apply a dispassionate approach to natural history. Rather, the very combination of 'things' with 'persons & actions', though disavowed by authors such as Plot, allowed for an appreciation of the way in which the former had been utilised and understood both in the recent past and in antiquity. Each period possessed an intellectual, political, and emotional importance. For Plot, rustic customs and superstitions presented a 'straw-man' against which the antiquity and authority of the Anglican Church could be established. This task, though ongoing since the onset of the Reformation, was undoubtedly made all the more pertinent by the restoration of the episcopate. As he noted in regard to Saxon 'Well-worship' at St. Clement in Oxford,

[this] was believed to be so effectual in curing divers distempers, and thereupon held to be of so great Sanctity, that there they made vows, and brought their alms and offerings; a custom, though common enough in those days, yet always forbidden by our Anglican Council...

Likewise, at Brewood and Bilbrook in Staffordshire, the decking of healing wells with flowers and boughs on Saints' days, though 'now observed only for decency and customs sake...[and] innocent enough' could be traced back to the practices of the ancient Britons and Saxons, these having been 'strictly prohibited by our Anglican Councills as long agoe as King Edgar'.

For Aubrey the Middle Ages represented a kind of golden age that had been ended by the religious extremism and iconoclasm of the Reformation and by the violence of the

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163 Plot, Staffordshire, p.109
165 Plot, Oxfordshire, p.50
166 Plot, Staffordshire, p.318
Civil Wars; a period, as he put it, of ‘fanatique rage’. Perhaps for this reason his attitude towards country cures and beliefs was milder than that of earlier Protestant polemicists. Unlike them he was not interested in the condemnation of Romish superstitions, but in the survival of ancient customs and beliefs. He hoped, as he wrote in his ‘Perambulation of Surrey’, to ‘strike some truth’ out of the ‘fabulous Traditions’ of local rustics. Like Thomas Browne (whose Urne Buriall and Pseudodoxia Epidemica influenced Restoration antiquarians), Aubrey believed that these truths would consist largely of fables and legends that were begun by the learned and retained by the ignorant. For, as he put it, ‘the height of Antiquity ends in Fable: and the depth of Ignorance descends to Credulity’.

Aubrey’s work is replete with attempts to tie contemporary beliefs with those described by Pliny, Ovid, and Homer. He linked the use of honeyed wine as a base for herbal medicines (something which was as common among élites as it was among rustics) to Pliny’s Natural History; Ovid’s Metamorphoses were cited in relation to the belief that particular environments produced cunning or avaricious people; and Homeric legend was mentioned in relation to the belief among Surrey sextons that small white flowers grew spontaneously on ground where a corpse was buried.

This tendency to look for vestiges of the past in rustic beliefs reached its peak in Aubrey’s Remaines of Gentilisme and Judaisme, a text which, though written from the mid to late 1680s, remained in manuscript (albeit one circulated among his friends) until it was published in a bastardised form first by Henry Ellis as part of his edition of Brand’s Observations on popular antiquities (1813) and then, in 1881, by James Britten. The section of Aubrey’s text which deals with medical recipes consists primarily of extracts from Pliny’s Natural History and Browne’s Pseudodoxia Epidemica. These are correlated in places with examples of their present day use either by Wiltshire country folk or by people who had written to him. The use by Mr Dennys of Poole in Dorsetshire of a

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167 Hunter, Aubrey, p.186; Quoted in ibid., p.166
168 Bodleian MS Aubrey 4, f.88v. For an example of a polemical work see Walter Bailey, A Briefe Discours of Certain Bathes or Medicinall Waters in the Countie of Warwicke (1587), pp.5-6
169 Bodleian MS Aubrey 1, f.132v
spell to cure the bite of a mad dog is recorded as never having failed. B.G. Cramer, a
german scholar who copied some of Aubrey's papers for the Royal Society, noted on
the manuscript of 'Remaines', that as with Pliny, women and children in his native
county also placed the teeth they had lost by a mouse's nest in the hope that they would
be given iron replacements.172

More notable still is the attention that Aubrey paid both to the social and political
function of superstition and its place, along with that of 'gentilisme' in general, in early
Christianity. The early part of the text (particularly that titled 'Ecclesiastica') is full of
citations from Ovid, Homer, Horace, and Pliny, that point to the incorporation by the
early Church of pagan prayers and rites into its liturgy and sacraments. While the use of
holy wafers is traced to a mention in Horace's Epodon, images and icons are linked to
mentions of idolatry in Ovid's Metamorphoses. Holy words - the basis, as we have seen,
of a number of medical charms and spells - are described in the context of book twenty-
eight of Pliny's Natural History.173

However obnoxious this may have been to Aubrey (and there is no indication that it
was), superstition was, given the 'Ecclesiastical politie of those times', an ideal way of
maintaining control over the vulgar. For as he put it, 'Nulla res efficacius multitudinem
regit quam superstition', 'nothing rules the mob more efficiently than superstition.'174
Whether or not Aubrey believed that superstition had its place in contemporary society is
a difficult question to answer. While on the one hand he wrote of the 'lecherie in Lyeing:
and imposing on the Credulous'175 and of the 'Piae Fraudes' involved in all 'Priest-
craft'176, on the other he believed that superstition, if removed, would simply be
replaced by 'Atheisme, and (consequently) Libertinisme'.177 This, as we shall see in the

171 A full provenance is provided in John Aubrey, Three Prose Works, (ed.) John Buchanan-
Brown, (Sussex: Fontwell, 1972), pp.401-8. The original MS is kept as BL Lansdowne 231
ff.101-243
Both the wording of this spell ('Rebus Rubus Epitescum') and the instructions for its use are
similar to that of the spell use by Henry Fowler. Again, no source is given.; ibid. p.265
173 Remaines, (ed.) Buchanan-Brown, p.164; ibid., pp.156-7
Numa Pomplius, the quotation was from Curtius.
175 R.S. MS 92 (B. Cramer's manuscript copy of Aubrey's Memoires of Naturall Remarques of
the County of Wilts), p.366
176 Quoted in the introduction to Three Prose Works, (ed.) Buchanan-Brown, p.xxxiv.
177 Remaines, (ed.) Buchanan-Brown, p.132
following chapter, was really a question of how the episcopate should present itself to late seventeenth-century society.

Notable among those who read Aubrey’s manuscript were John Evelyn and John Toland. Though also engaged (as can be seen from his commonplace books) with the task of extracting pagan and early Christian superstitions from literary sources, Evelyn was critical of any role that they might have in contemporary Christianity.\textsuperscript{178} Toland, on the other hand, posited, in his \textit{Pantheisticon} (1720), a two-religion theory in which a simple monotheistic religion served the wise whilst a gaudy, superstitious religion catered for the vulgar.\textsuperscript{179}

\textsuperscript{178} For example BL Evelyn MS 54(1), f.7 where he deals with the idolatry of the worshippers of Baal.

\textsuperscript{179} Hunter, \textit{Aubrey}, p.220 suggests that Aubrey’s \textit{Hypothesis Ethicorum \\& Scala Religionis} though now lost, would most likely have favoured a single, rationalist form of piety.
Chapter 5

Supernatural medicine

'Superstition renders man a fool, and scepticism makes him mad.'

Thomas Fuller M.D. Gnomologia, (1732), p.183

'Reason, speaking never so clearly to the wise and Virtuous, had never Authority enough to prevail on the multitude.'

John Locke, The Reasonableness of Christianity, (1695)

Introduction

Writing to John Evelyn in January 1663 John Beale related how he had,

...healed hundreds of the female and phantastique diseases, wch are the worst of all, hysterical, wind in the sides and stomach, wch I call obsession, wth a little warm water, put into a serpentine stone. For these ye magic works best by phantastical cures for phantastical diseases. And if ye warmth and fire have a pretence from heaven, or from mysticall Art, who can doubt ye cure?

His approach here is commensurate with an overwhelming trend among Restoration élites towards a secular, physiological explanation for madness that has been described by historians of early modern England. Where the 'pretence' of supernatural healing was offered, it was done in order to indulge a rural population that was, more than ever, out of touch with the metropolis and its opinions.

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1 In The Works of John Locke, (London: T. Longman et al., 1794), Vol. 6, p.135
2 R.S.L. B.1. Letter 30 Beale to Evelyn January 2nd 1663
Yet there is more to Beale’s approach than meets the eye. In both this letter and another written on the same day, he made it clear that he believed in the ability of certain ‘crystalline and splendid stones’ to attract ‘spirits’, and in the social importance of exorcism, noting that, ‘He yt would raise a reputation worthy of the age of miracles must be ... filling in belleys with bread and sauce, healing diseases, and casting out divels etc’.

His concerns however were manifold. While two of his sources for the healing power of stones, J.B. Van Helmont and Tommaso Campanella, had offered explanations that were based on the power of sympathy and magnetism respectively – explanations which, notwithstanding objections against the ‘Catholic’ Campanella, could be integrated within the existing trend towards ‘occult’ but natural qualities – his third source, Meric Casaubon, had repeated the familiar Calvinist warning that healing of this sort (however symbolic) could never work without the tacit assistance of the devil.**

Explanations such as these also had social ramifications. As Beale remarked in a letter to Boyle,

...it is not civil language in these days to say, that the maniacal, lunatic, epileptical, ecstatic or convulsive, are possessed with devils, or unclean spirits, yet judicious Mede hath proved the holy scriptures sometimes use that language indifferently, as termini convertibles; and some very learned persons of late are engaged to make all these symptoms merely natural, others strain all their operations to be natural, divine, and forsooth prophethical.5

To write about or talk of devils, exorcisms, miracles and witches not only attracted accusations of enthusiasm and sectarianism, it was also brought on (often in the same diatribe), ‘atheistical scoffers’, ‘laureat atheists’, and ‘swarms of buffoons, blasphemers...which explode all religion, graces and virtues’.6

These last fears were both imaginary in that Beale used ‘atheist’ as a blanket term of abuse for all manner of libertinism and theological heterodoxy, and real because by the

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4 R.S.E.L. B.1. Letter 31 Beale to Evelyn January 2nd 1663. Possible sources would have included Campanella’s De Sensu Rerum et Magia, (Paris: I. dv Bray, 1637), in which book 4 of De Magia deals with precious stones, and Van Helmont’s Curationis magneticae, (Luxemburg: H. Reuland, 1621). Beale may have read about the ‘Expte of Dr Dee’ in Casaubon’s A True and Faithful Relation of What Passed for Many Yeers between Dr. John Dee ... and Some Spirits, (1659).
5 Boyle, Works, Vol. 6, p.370 Beale to Boyle November 9th 1663
6 Boyle, Works, Vol.6, p.445 Beale to Boyle June 26th 1682
late seventeenth century the Christianity espoused by him and his closest associates (that is a Christianity based on God's unique and ongoing revelation to man) was increasingly under threat from a number of different angles. From dualists such as Descartes, and materialists such as Hobbes and Spinoza, who in their own various ways threatened either to make God's intervention a necessity in every interaction of matter, or to deprive him of his potency to intervene; from Deists who gave God a role only in the initial Creation; and from freethinkers whose comparative study of Judaism, Islam, and other ancient or 'pagan' religions threatened to deprive both Christianity of its unique status as the only religion based on revelation, and with it, the priesthood of its authority. Whether or not everyone who used terms such as 'atheist' had read or understood the works concerned is difficult to tell (the indication is that a number of cases they had not), but either way, these works formed at least part of the context for their fears.

Elsewhere, this context was provided by the ambiguous stance taken by the Anglican Church over the precise role that revelation and special providence should play in the lives of worshipping Christians. Scripture (whose exegesis was, for many devout Protestants, second only to revelation in importance), presented plenty of evidence for the role of Christ's miracles in converting idolaters during his lifetime and shortly afterwards, without giving any clear indication as to when the need for miracles had ceased. Moreover, the solution that had been suggested, first by Luther and later (and more appropriately for the English context) by churchmen such as the Dean (and later Archbishop) of Canterbury John Tillotson (1630-94), was, for some, only partly

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Chapter 5

satisfactory. By insisting that the statements described in, for example, John 14:12 applied solely to the Apostolic age, ecclesiastics of Tillotson’s era undermined their own appeal to scripture and tradition as the basis for the episcopate’s authority as the true ‘catholic’ Church. Likewise, their assertion that ‘reasonable’ Christians no longer needed direct evidence of miracles in order to believe in God (this being an assertion that would receive new impetus through the work of John Locke) threatened, at least so far as the elderly Beale was concerned, to make the common people, if they were not so already, diffident to the claims of revealed religion. It was from this theological perspective that he and his closest associates discussed the existence of supernatural healing, witchcraft, and miracles. Not insignificantly, it was also one starting point for the work of Deists and freethinkers.\(^{11}\)

This chapter falls into three parts. The first part begins by looking at how discussions about the nature of miracles and special providence shaped attitudes towards supernatural healing in the thirty years that followed the Restoration. It investigates the interaction between theology and natural philosophy, and in particular the gap that existed between the treatment of miracles in scripture – which, as we have seen, was unclear as to when the need for miracles had ended – and the motivation behind the desire to give a ‘reasonable’ account of Christianity. Though with hindsight, a consensus was achieved (at least amongst the majority of Anglicans) by the 1730s over the applicability of Locke’s work to their beliefs, such clarity did not exist when his work was first published. As John Yolton has demonstrated, at this stage Locke’s work created considerable discomfort amongst those Christians who saw aspects of his work, in particular his rejection of innate ideas, as a threat to religious orthodoxy.\(^{12}\) Locke’s attitude towards miracles was linked to his rejection of innate ideas. For while he accepted the treatment of miracles and divine revelation as he found it in Scripture on the grounds that ‘the messenger that delivers it is sent from God, and...cannot be known but by some credentials given him by God himself’, he discounted contemporary claims to truth through revelation or ‘seeing the light’ as enthusiasm, preferring instead a system of ‘natural’ or reason-based ‘revelation’.\(^{13}\) These discussions form the context

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\(^{11}\) On this point see R.M. Burns, *The Great Debate on Miracles. From Joseph Glanvill to David Hume*, (London and Toronto: Associate University Presses, 1981)


for the second part of the chapter. As is detailed in the third section of the chapter, Locke’s work, and in particular his criticism of enthusiasm and childish credulity, was one of many starting points for the work of early Deists such as John Toland and John Trenchard (1662-1723) and the third Earl of Shaftesbury Anthony Ashley Cooper (1671-1713). In attacking the role that priests had played and continued to play in duping the people (this being a clarion call for a reformed polity), writers such as these contributed much towards a far-sweeping assault on supernatural medicine and what they termed, in contrast to the ‘natural religion’ that they advocated, superstition.

**Restoration attitudes towards miracles: John Evelyn and the ‘History of Religion’**

Though no reply to Beale’s letter exists among the letters that John Evelyn carefully copied into his letter books, some interesting clues to his attitude towards miracles can be obtained from two other rarely used pieces of evidence: the manuscript for a book which he had been working on since 1657 but which was only published in 1850 as *The History of Religion*, and the three commonplace books which formed the basis for at least part of that manuscript.¹⁴ These abound with information on theology, morals, philosophy, and medicine. His sources, of which there were several hundred, included scripture, pagan and early Christian authors, Renaissance neo-Platonism, travel literature, history, manuscripts that he had borrowed from Beale, and, of course, his own experiences, both in England, and on the Continent.¹⁵

Evelyn’s decision to start keeping *adversaria* in the early 1650s came about through his interest in humanism and as part of his preparation for life under a restored monarchy and episcopate. During this time Evelyn, together with a number of other Royalists, secretly attended services at which the banned Book of Common Prayer was used. The material he collected, while reflecting his broad intellectual concerns, was intended to bolster the position of the English Church by providing evidence for its antiquity and from that, its authority.


¹⁵ Evelyn’s sources can be reconstructed both from the entries in his commonplace books and from a list which he made at the end of BL Evelyn MS 54(3). For Evelyn’s continental travels see John Bowle, *John Evelyn and his World*, (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981)
He began *The History of Religion* with a damning description of the religious commotion that had taken place during the Civil War and the Interregnum. As he put it,

...men of all religions (or fancies, rather), Jews, Socinians, Anabaptists, Antinomians, Independents, Quakers, Pagans, and (what is worse) Atheists, and a thousand new sects and denominations, were protected and encouraged under...a Godly Party, and persons above ordinances, freely preaching, printing, and promoting their extravagant doctrine...\(^{16}\)

This was followed by an account of earlier 'Pagan, Jewish and philosophical errors' and 'the monstrous corruption and decadence of the God's own people, the Jewish Church', an attack on Mohammed ('that signal imposter and libidinous robber'), and, finally, a jibe at Vanini, Pomponazzi, Bruno, and Spinoza, whom he described as proud, ostentatious and of little or no religion. These authors — many of whom were favoured reading for English Deists — had proved 'a wretched obstacle to searchers of holy truth', deifying the power of matter and casting doubt upon the 'supernatural inspirations, visions, and favours' of biblical prophets and great men.\(^{17}\)

Evelyn used the history of the ancient Church (as found in the writings of early Church Fathers and the growing body of contemporary scholarship), to illustrate the decline of the Roman Catholic Church into corruption and vain ritual. He ridiculed the penance served by some Franciscan Friars and poured scorn on the 'shrines, statues, altars, pageants, temples, aspersions, lamps and candles...and other innumerable fopperies copied from Pagan rites.'\(^{18}\) In order to support the episcopate he argued that there was nothing in the history of the ancient church that would support the claims of presbyters. His appeal to antiquity was in keeping with a practice which was advocated by such theologians as John Tillotson, John Cosin, and Jeremy Taylor (whom he knew personally), and which had been influential in the writings of Richard Hooker.\(^{19}\) In common with these authors, Evelyn believed that the model of the ancient Church


\(^{17}\) Evelyn, *History of Religion*, Vol.2, p.213; *ibid.*, pp.269-71; *ibid.*, Vol.1, p.xxvii; cf. BL Evelyn MS 54(1), p.22 'Pomponatius...did denye all miracles undertaken blasphemously to give a natural reason for all our saviour did.'

\(^{18}\) BL Evelyn MS 54(1), p.10 'If any of them have spoken too loude', he noted, 'he must lick the Crosse in the dust with his tongue. Sometymes for penance a frier is to eat in the same dish with the catt.'

provided a means by which the episcopate could retain its spiritual power whilst, at the same time avoiding accusations of popery and the threat of sectarianism. In his view, 'The True Religion is that which is most ancient and most Catholic, decent, simple, devout, void of novelty, singularity, and superstition.'

Though Evelyn was adamant that Christianity was a 'Supernatural Religion' in which miracles had occurred and could occur in the future he also believed that 'the greatest miracle of our Religion is that we subsist without any.' Biblical miracles were for biblical times as it was 'By these [that] multitudes were converted...to the faith...without weapons, or what the world calls wit, overthrew the politics of statesmen, the subtlety of philosophers, and all the wisdom of the wise.' As the Bishop of Rochester Thomas Sprat noted, Jesus had 'stooped' to convince men by their senses.

These views were mirrored by the Bishop of Worcester Edward Stillingfleet in his *Origines Sacrae, Or a Rational Account of the Grounds of Christian Faith, As to the Truth and Divine Authority of the Scriptures* (1662). As he observed, miracles were,

...necessary for confirming the truth of the Gospel...because the Gospel was to be propagated over the world without any other rational evidence than was contained in the miracles for the confirmation of it.

Similarly he noted how,

a power of miracles is not constantly and perpetually necessary in all those who manage the affairs of Heaven here on earth, or that act in the name of God in the world. When the doctrine of faith is once settled in sacred records, and the divine revelation of that doctrine sufficiently attested, by a power of miracles in the revealers of it. What imaginable necessity or pretext can there be for a contrived power of miracles, especially among such as already own the Divine revelation of the Scriptures?

While the ancient Church had had recourse to miracles present day Christians were expected to find their faith in personal piety and in the miracles detailed in scripture.

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25 Stillingfleet, *Origines Sacrae*, pp.140-1
26 A point made in the sixth of the Church's Thirty Nine Articles of Faith.
To do otherwise was to lay one's 'fancy' or 'imagination' open to the risk of a devilish or 'popish imposture' — contemporary miracles having been used by Counter-Reformation Catholics such as Cardinal Bellarmine to argue that their church was indeed, God's true church.\footnote{On Counter-Reformation miracles see Walker, 'Cessation of Miracles', p.113} In Stillingfleet's view, the only possibility that a further miracle might occur lay in 'an extraordinary commission from God' or the repeal or replacement of a Divine law. While he did not discount this, he felt that 'we have all that is necessary to be believed.'\footnote{Stillingfleet, \textit{Origines Sacrae}, p.142 and p.146}

Such arguments as Stillingfleet's were based on an Augustinian distinction between the state of the early Church and later practice, a need to place distance between the practices of Protestants and those of Catholics, and readings from scripture. While the second of these considerations was amenable to Protestants who had been brought up on a diet of anti-Catholic invective and who were fearful of England's apparent decline into popery, the last was more problematic. As has been noted, scripture gave little support to the argument that the age of miracles had ended. This being as it was, commentators such as Stillingfleet and, before him, Richard Sheldon (a convert from Catholicism), made their case by drawing parallels between the cessation of Apostolic miracles once idolaters had been converted and the ending of the miracles associated with the Exodus of the Jews from Egypt. Alternatively, they pointed to First Corinthians 13:2 and Paul's assertion that mysteries and prophetic powers were nothing without faith and love.\footnote{Sheldon, \textit{A Survey of the Miracles of the Church of Rome} (1616) cited in Walker, 'Cessation of Miracles', p.114. This line had also been taken by Aquinas (\textit{Summa Theologicae}, Pt.2-2ae, question 178, Art.178)} Evelyn, though usually rigorous when it came to his sources, recorded in \textit{The History of Religion} that 'an apostle', had related that 'miracles are for them who do not believe, not for those who do, and are already converted.'\footnote{Evelyn, \textit{History of Religion}, Vol. 1, p.316} Likewise, in his commonplace book he quoted the assertion made by Bacon in the \textit{Advancement of Learning} that, 'There never was Miracle wrought by God to confirme an Atheist because the light of Nature might have lead him to confesse a God. But Miracles are designed to convert Idolaters, who have acknowledged a Deity but erre in his Adoration'\footnote{Evelyn MS 54(1), p.2; Bacon, \textit{Works}, Vol. 4, pp.341-2. It was in this section of his work that Bacon (adapting Matthew 22:21) attempted to make a distinction between 'mysteries of faith' and the 'contemplation of nature'}.  

\footnote{27 On Counter-Reformation miracles see Walker, 'Cessation of Miracles', p.113\footnote{Stillingfleet, \textit{Origines Sacrae}, p.142 and p.146\footnote{Sheldon, \textit{A Survey of the Miracles of the Church of Rome} (1616) cited in Walker, 'Cessation of Miracles', p.114. This line had also been taken by Aquinas (\textit{Summa Theologicae}, Pt.2-2ae, question 178, Art.178)\footnote{Evelyn, \textit{History of Religion}, Vol. 1, p.316\footnote{Evelyn MS 54(1), p.2; Bacon, \textit{Works}, Vol. 4, pp.341-2. It was in this section of his work that Bacon (adapting Matthew 22:21) attempted to make a distinction between 'mysteries of faith' and the 'contemplation of nature'.}}}}
Interestingly, this was the line which Beale took further on in the letter to Boyle which has been cited above. Stating his desire not to 'interpose' any judgement of his own, he pointed instead to the writings of Richard Field (who had been Dean of Gloucester from 1610 to 1616) and the Dutch theologian Hugo Grotius (1583-1645). Following Grotius’ commentary on Matthew 12:26, he noted that in antiquity not only Israelites, Jews, and Christians, but also Egyptians, Assyrians, Greeks, Romans, Barbarians and 'Savages' had invoked 'the great name of Jehovah' in order to expel demons and cure diseases. In this context, the miracles of Moses and the apostles had been necessary to display the power of the 'True God' over 'the gods of the gentiles.' Old miracles would continue to have their impact so long as men retained their faith. In fact, as Beale noted (this time quoting Grotius), it was only those who were guilty of ignominy or diffidence who demanded present day miracles.

This said, it was over just this issue that Beale made an extraordinary statement. Having cited both Augustine and article seventy-two of the Constitutions and Canons Ecclesiastical of 1604 (under which a clergyman had to obtain permission from his bishop before casting out a devil), he went on to ask,

But to forbear the high language of exorcisms, and of miracles, is it to the credit of protestants, if Jews, Mahometans and Romanists, do refer more to the efficacy of faith and prayers in desperate diseases than they, the reformers, do ordinarily? Do not acute diseases oft times lie in such disguises, as may need more of divine than of human conduct, more of the happiness than of the art or force of the physician, chirurgion, or application; and we see how the critical state may alter in a moment: and that may now be an antidote, which with an hour before or after, might be a furious poison. And we have many instances which do import, that in our days some have the gift of healing, though perchance not in the same vigour as in the apostolic age.

He cited James 5:14 which deals with the anointing of the sick and remarked,

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32 Richard Field (1561-1616), Of the Church. Five Bookes, (1606-10). Beale did not state which of Grotius’ works he used. A possible source would have been De Veritate Religionis Christianae, (1629)

33 'A daemonibus ad morbos quoque mos transit. Eiusmodi ergo exorcismi eventum saepe suum habuerunt, non quod vis ulla in syllabarum prononciatione sita esset, sed quod verus Deus illis potissimum nominibus nosci appellarique vellet, atque ideo vim suum tum demum exsereret, cum apertissima locutione constaret ipsum, non aliquem gentilium Deorum, esse invocatum.'

34 'Sed nos, cujus nee culpa est in nostra ignavia aut diffidentia id solemus in Deum rejicere; sunt autem'. I am grateful to Dr N.I. Serikoff for his help in translating the above passages.

And is it not more of a mercy and charity, to offer somewhat of the good Samaritan’s oil...and at least to solicit ἐυθανασία, than to fly the field, and forsake the patient in his greatest exigence, as it is the manner of some physicians, lest they should lose the reputation of doing more than they can do, or ought to be done in this vale of morality.

Whilst holy oil and extreme unction had been formally abandoned by English Protestants between 1547 and 1549, the latter being looked upon with particular disdain by polemicists, Beale’s comment shows how, in this instance, he was indeed interested in the ritual of supernatural healing; if only to overcome what he saw as the diffidence and ignominy of those around him.

Writing to Boyle two years later he remarked,

I can show you in England the full body of some towns and countries, very zealous, devout, ready to do, to suffer, and to expend freely in the way of their religion, yet within twenty or thirty miles of that place, the whole body of people habitually, and time out of mind, insensible, and wholly as unconcern themselves in all discourses of religion, and are apt to be fanatics, that make any pretence to seriousness in devotion. Hence I collect, that by custom many people do unconcern themselves in the holy traditions, which they received from their ancestors.

Although there was ‘more revelation and grace, than we can strictly claim from our natural frames’, only a candid use of reason could help in determining how much ‘holy tradition’ should be employed to keep men from atheism or fanaticism. His views here show some continuity with those that he had held prior to the Restoration. Writing to Hartlib in 1657 he had complained that though it was ‘our custom...to do things in a cold and formal way’, there was a danger that, unless carried out with the necessary awe, liturgy would be reduced to a mere formality.

As John Spurr has detailed, the use of the sacraments was an ongoing question for the Restoration church as divines tried and failed to find a balance between the ‘horrible’ doctrines of popery and the need to give the episcopate a ‘real presence’ amongst ‘the

36 Euthanasia or ‘a good death’.
38 Boyle, Works, Vol.6, pp.391-2 Beale to Boyle October 11th 1665
39 BL Add. MS 4365 ff.209r-209v ‘Exemplar Literarum Rdi & Clarismi Viri D. Johannis Beale Pastoris Herefordiensis ad Dnum Hartlibium Octob. 22. 1657’. I am grateful to Dr Alheydis Plassmann for her assistance in translating this letter.
meaner sort of people'. While during times of illness and bereavement men such as Evelyn were able to accept divine providence and find solace in prayer, confession, and in texts such as Taylor's *Holy Living* (1654) and *Holy Dying* (1651), others, or so Beale believed, required further consolation either from the Church or, as Beale suggested in a letter to Boyle, from the sacred laboratory of the experimenter. However, it would be wrong to take his opinions as an indication that the need for ritual really was allied to the commoner sort. It was from this quarter that Beale faced criticism. As he related in another document, 'a very plaine man...no scholar' had stood-up during one of his sermons and shouted "you preach your selfe...more than you preach Iesus Christ." Though we do not know the subject of Beale's sermon, it is more than likely that members of his congregation, however low born, had access to the Bible or to religious handbooks and could decide for themselves if their minister was following an orthodox scriptural line in whatever he preached. Others of a higher social standing also seem to have regarded Beale as a difficult quantity. John Oliver, who was minister to the Phelips family at nearby Montacute recorded in his commonplace book that,

This J.B. or John Beale was minister of Yeovil, a man of some pretences to university and transcendence of all knowledge, but a woefull timeserver I doubt, one that would say anything in private that would please his company, any thing in [the] pulpit that would please the times.

Oliver regarded Beale's theories and prophesies, which, as letters to Evelyn and Boyle reveal, included dreams and premonitions of theft and the plague, as 'meere windy vapours.' Others would regard his sort of approach to religion as priestcraft.

Natural philosophy

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43 Quoted in Leslie, 'The Spiritual Husbandry of John Beale', p.153. Leslie dates the entry to around the time of the Restoration. Oliver's commonplace book is kept as part of the Phelips manuscripts at the Somerset Record Office. For Beale's dreams about the coming of the plague see R.S. E.L. B.1. Letter 55 Beale to Boyle October 8th 1670
While Beale and his closest associates shared a common interest in sustaining the plausibility of supernatural phenomena, both as a support to their own beliefs (few relied on miracles alone to provide evidence for God's existence) and to those of the wider community, it was the question of how best to achieve this that most dominated their discussions. Needless to say, a solution to this question also relied on freeing supernatural phenomena from their associations with sectarianism and credulity in such a way that those involved would not be tarred with the same brush.

One answer that stands out most clearly was the attempt made by English natural philosophers to link the Protestant insistence on a scriptural account for miracles with their own experimental method. This, it was hoped, would bring *gravitas* to the subjects involved while at the same time enforcing the centrality of miracles to revealed Christianity. It is also likely, as Peter Dear has recently suggested, that this approach was designed to put distance between the English Protestants and French Catholics — certainly propagandists such as Sprat and Glanvill emphasised a distinction between Catholic or Cartesian ‘dogmatism’ and English empiricism, though it should be noted that the English approach (if we are to speak of such a thing) was as much a product of internal divisions as it was of external ones.

Though both Sprat and Glanvill, and before them the Great Tew Circle of philosophers and churchmen, had emphasised the role that limited certainty and a moderate empirical approach could play in the defence of revealed Christianity, one of the most substantial post-Restoration statements on this issue came in Boyle's *The Christian Virtuoso* — a text which he published in 1690 in the context of what he regarded as 'the deplorable growth of Irreligion especially among those that aspired to pass for Wits, and Several of them too for Philosophers.' Here he expressed his conviction that 'matters of facts' could be

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44 See for example Robert Boyle, *The Christian Virtuoso*, (1690-91), p.8. Like Evelyn, Boyle quoted Bacon to the effect that a miracle was never wrought to convince an atheist of the existence of God. On this point see MacIntosh, pp.194-203

45 Peter Dear, 'Miracles, Experiments, and the Ordinary Course of Nature', *ISIS*, 1990, 81, pp. 663-83; Burns, p.16

used to study religious issues in much the same way that they had been used to research physical phenomena. He defined three sort of experience: ‘personal experience’ or experience that did not rely on external testimony; ‘historical experience’ or the ‘completely attested’ experience of others; and ‘supernatural’ or ‘theological’ experience, by which he meant the testimony of those mentioned in Scripture. As he remarked,

I see not, why that, which I call Theological Experience, may not be admitted; since the Revelations that God makes concerning what he has Done, or purposes to Do, are but Testimonies of things, most of them matters of Fact, and all of them such, as, so far forth, as they are meerly Revelations, cannot be known by Reasoning, but by Testimony.\(^\text{47}\)

While biblical shepherds, fishermen and tentmakers were to be believed on account of their direct testimony (and here he drew an interesting parallel with present-day ploughmen, smiths and others ‘conversant with the works of Nature’), Christ and the apostles were to be believed because their miracles, in contrast to those of the Egyptian magi and other tricksters, had both altered the course of nature and had been predicted elsewhere in the Scriptures.\(^\text{48}\) Careful not to undermine the standing of scripture itself, which, he noted, was ‘sufficient’ but not ‘irresistible’ evidence for men’s faith, or to cast doubt on the ‘mysterious’ nature of Christianity, he emphasised the role of the ‘experimental philosophers’ in using ‘right reason’ (that is a form of practical and moral reasoning derived from Aquinas), in fighting off the enemies of religion. Though Boyle did not single out individuals for criticism, it is likely that in identifying those who placed an excessive emphasis on ‘Abstracted Reason’ he was addressing Cartesians and others (and this can be taken to include religious enthusiasts) who espoused an egocentric theory of knowledge. As he noted in the second, unpublished part of his text, ‘the proper duty and office of reason’ was not to teach us ‘supernatural things’ but ‘to lead us to a supernatural teacher.\(^\text{49}\)

Boyle’s attitude towards miracles themselves shows a number of interesting features. Like Tillotson and Stillingfleet (who was one of his confidants in matters of religion and conscience) he thought that the need for biblical miracles had been based on

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\(^{47}\) \textit{The Christian Virtuoso}, pp.55-5  
\(^{48}\) \textit{The Christian Virtuoso}, pp.73-4  
\(^{49}\) \textit{The Christian Virtuoso}, Part 2 in Boyle, \textit{Works}, Vol.6, pp.707-14. Boyle had also stated this view in \textit{The Excellency of Theology} (1674)
'circumstances of Place, Time, and Persons.' He noted that 'Christian Preachers' had 'Pretended to and Appeal'd to Miracles' because of the 'great disadvantages' under which they had worked and because 'Reveal'd Religion how true soever it be, can scarce be prov'd but by Moral Demonstrations.' 'Unlikely Events', as he put it with reference to earlier prophecies, had been 'fulfilled by unlikely Means.' Biblical miracles had been 'transient' occurrence that were suited to the times in which they had taken place.

Boyle then pointed to Exodus 16 (which, as we have seen, was a favoured source for theologians interested in miracles) and the account of God's gift of manna to the Children of Israel, in order to argue for separate category of longer lasting miracles which he termed 'permanent miracles'. One example he gave was the 'Conversions made of multitudes of Infidels, in vast Regions of America, (to name no other countries).'^50^ Though at first glance this might be taken to suggest that Boyle, like Beale, was hinting at the use of present-day miracles in order to encourage those who already recognised a deity to accept Christianity, this was not the case, and Boyle was simply pointing to the fact that so many people had been converted. As a supporter of John Eliot's translation of the Bible for the Indians in Massachusetts and as Governor of the Company for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England, Boyle clearly believed that Scripture was the best way to teach people that Christianity was a supernatural religion.^51^ This was confirmed at the end of the second part of *The Christian Virtuoso* where he noted in a disparaging tone that,

There are some professors of Christianity, that talk and live, as if they would introduce a theological magick, (if I may so call it) which, by the help of certain words, habits, gestures, and other ceremonies, may enable them, without sound, faith, and good life, to do strange feats in Christianity, as superstitious magicians pretend by charms, spells, etc.^52^

Miracles and occult qualities

While some historians have seen in the attempts made by Boyle and his fellow natural philosophers to defend revealed Christianity against atheism and enthusiasm, a continuity between their treatment of miracles and other occult phenomena, this is to

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^50^ *The Christian Virtuoso*, pp.100-102
^51^ Eliot's translation was published in 1663. Boyle held his post as Governor from 1662 until 1689.
misread the situation. A general conviction that good evidence of ‘intelligent beings’ would help in ‘the reclaiming’ atheists (or so Boyle assured Glanvill) should not hide the fact that for men such as Boyle, there was a dividing line between first causes (i.e. miracles) and ‘occult’, though at the same time, secondary, causes. Aside from the dangers of mistaking the effects of natural magic for those of ‘Divine Power’ – this being a danger associated with discussions of popular credulity and ‘juggling’ – one of the greatest terrors faced by someone like Boyle was that a real miracle, whether biblical or contemporary (and all voluntarists believed in such a possibility) would be dismissed as a natural event.

These tensions can be illustrated by some of the responses towards the Irish thaumaturgical healer, Valentine Greatrakes. Greatrakes came to England in January 1666 (a year which had millenarian overtones both for Conformists and non-Conformists) on the invitation of Anne, Vicountess Conway of Ragley who along with the Cambridge Platonist Henry More had heard of his existing reputation for healing. He stayed until May 1666 during which time he appears to have healed a number of people of tumours, scrofula, ulcers, and fits. As with other healers, religious and otherwise, some of Greatrakes’ patients recovered fully whilst others relapsed. He performed cures in front of the Royal Society (they were interested in the testimonies that this would produce), church divines, the King’s physicians, and Charles II who, as God’s anointed monarch, was supposed to have had a monopoly over the healing ‘touch’. A number of historians have focused on this last feature, attempting to place Greatrakes’ activities in the context of a weak Stuart monarchy which until 1689 used its monopoly over the ‘Royal Touch’ to bolster its power. Though Greatrakes’ role as a

53 This tendency is perhaps strongest in Simon Schaffer’s otherwise excellent ‘Godly Men and Mechanical Philosophers, Souls and Spirits in Restoration Natural Philosophy’, Science in Context, (1987), Vol. 1, No. 1, pp.55-85. In my view Schaffer confuses discussions relating to the ‘mind’ (which Boyle included under the category of ‘supra-mechanical’ on the basis that the order of such things had been established by God at the Creation) with those relating to the supernatural proper (i.e. God’s extraordinary interventions) in just the way that the Cambridge Platonists did. For Boyle’s distinctions see The Christian Virtuoso, Part 2 in Boyle, Works, Vol.6, p.727

54 Boyle, Works, Vol.6, pp.57-60 Boyle to Glanvill September 18th 1677 and February 10th 1678


56 On this point see J.C.D. Clark, English Society 1688-1832. Ideology, Social Structure and Political Practice During the Ancien Regime, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), pp.161-9 and,
parliamentarian from rebellious Ireland and his claims to miraculous healing power, tinged as they were with the teaching of the mystic Jacob Boehme, made him a natural candidate for the enmity of Royalists in particular, very few of those who responded to him, either in person or in writing, saw him as a direct threat to the monarchy. No attempt was made to arrest Greatrakes or return him to Ireland, and while political factors were pressing, theological concerns were also at the forefront of people's minds.  

Though Greatrakes was convinced that his healing powers were a miraculous gift from God 'to convince this age of Atheism' and to 'abate the Pride of the Papists, that make miracles the undeniable Manifesto of their Church', few—with the possible exception of Beale, who thought that Greatrakes' cures were 'convincing evidence of the powerful name of our Lord Jesus, in a season that needed some evidence, that all revelations were not fanatical'—were willing to take this particular line. The Dean of Cork George Rust reported to Glanvill that in the coffee-houses 'He [Greatrakes] goes under various censures...some take him to be a Conjuror, and some an Imposter, but other again adore him as an Apostle.' And while staunch Calvinists rejected Greatrakes on grounds that he was an unfit vessel for God's providence other, more moderate commentators, including Rust and More sought to explain his apparent successes (which included the young son of More's fellow Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth) by suggesting that an 'Elixir' or 'sanative Contagion' flowed between Greatrakes' hands and the body of the afflicted, thereby making his cures extraordinary but not miraculous.


57 The most notable exception was the High Church divine, David Lloyd who, in a pamphlet entitled Wonders No Miracles, or, Mr. Valentine Greatrates Gift of Healing Examined, (1666), attacked Greatrakes as a revolutionary and a rabble-rouser.

58 A Brief Account of Mr. Valentine GREATRAKS...(1666), pp.30-1 quoted in Duffy, p.263; Boyle, Works, Vol.6, p.390 Beale to Boyle September 7th 1665. Beale's approach was ambiguous, as, writing to Oldenburg three days earlier on September 4th (Oldenburg Correspondence, Vol. 2, p.496), he had remarked 'I see nothing to increase my faith in this particular but charmes.' Again, it may be that he was more interested in the impact of miracles on popular opinion than he was in their veracity.

Chapter 5

The fact that the explanations offered by Rust and More (and elaborated on by More in the 1666 edition of *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*) coincided closely with the publication of Henry Stubbe’s 1666 *Miraculous Conformist* — a text which the author dedicated to Boyle without first seeking his permission, and in which he attributed Greatrakes’ cures (along with those of the Christ and the Apostles) to effluvial action — has caused considerable debate amongst historians. While Boyle’s reaction was to complain bitterly to Stubbe that,

> If those relations of Mr Greatrakes’s cures, that I have not yet seen, shall convince me, I shall not scruple, since his belief and life gave me no just suspicions to acknowledge my conviction and to rejoice in the appearing of a Protestant that is enabled and forward to do good in such a way, especially in an age when many do take it upon themselves to deride all that is supernatural; and whilst they loudly cry up reason, make no better use of it than to employ it, first to depose faith, and then to serve passions and interests.

there is a suggestion (and this has been elaborated on by Nicholas Steneck) that Boyle was not just addressing Stubbe (as has been indicated by James Jacob), but that he was also tacitly criticising More, Glanvill and other ‘Latitudinarian’ clergymen for being too quick to attribute Greatrakes’ cures to natural phenomena. This issue is in many ways compounded by the fact that Boyle would go on to criticise More’s Platonism both implicitly, in *A Free Enquiry into the Vulgarly Received Notion of Nature* (1686) — a text which, according to its preface, he had prepared ‘about the year 1666’, and then explicitly, over his dogmatic assertion of a ‘Principium Hylarchium’ or ‘Spirit of Nature’; and by the fact that the parallels Stubbe drew between Greatrakes’ activities and those mentioned in Scripture would, as we shall see below, be mimicked by Toland and Woolston in their attacks on supernatural religion.

While, with hindsight, this is one example of the co-existence of what historians have termed the ‘conservative’ Enlightenment and the ‘radical’ Enlightenment, what is also

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60 Kaplan, p.183  
62 James Jacob, *Henry Stubbe, Radical Protestantism and the Early Enlightenment*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Nicholas H. Steneck, ‘Greatrakes the Stroker: The Interpretations of Historians’, *ISIS*, Vol. 73, (1982), pp.161-77 (esp. p.169). A reply to Steneck’s criticisms (which were based on Jacob’s earlier work) can be found in a postscript to Jacob’s text.  
63 On More’s debate with Boyle see above Chapter 4, fn.130 and Coudert, pp.123-4; Woolston, in his *Discourse on the Miracles of our Saviour, in View of the Present Controversy between Infidels and Apostates*, sixth edition, (1729), p.12, cited ‘The Irish Stroker, Greatrex’.  
64 The terms are those of John Pocock and Margaret Jacob respectively.
important, if, as I think we should, we accept Steneck’s suggestion, is the division that existed between members of the élite who seemingly believed in revealed Christianity but who faced a conundrum over how best to support it: whether, as was traditionally the case, with Aristotelianism (which Boyle also attacked in his Free Enquiry), with Platonism (which led men to confuse ‘occult qualities’ with angels, thereby reifying matter^65), or with corpuscularianism (which might lead to accusations of materialism and atheism). Seen in this light, lay medical culture, though clearly linked to this conundrum – both popular astrology and the doctrine of signatures played on notions of sympathy, antipathy and correspondence that were central to the thinking of Paracelsus and other neo-Platonists – was only one part of a wider interface between theology and natural philosophy.66 Most telling in this case was the fact that even after Boyle had witnessed Greatrake’s cures and compiled a long set of queries ‘about the stroker’, he was still puzzled as to their status.67

Witchcraft

For those who believed in their existence, witchcraft and demonic healing were the antithesis of true miracles. While the latter had been prophesised and were carried out only by sacred agents (either Christ or his Apostles), the former related to lower, though at the same time immaterial, agents who worked and continued to work through natural causes. While miracles could, albeit with difficulty, be located within the pages of Scripture, thereby alleviating the need for present day demonstrations, witchcraft posed a different set of problems as aside from its scriptural basis (which had already been questioned by authors such as Reginald Scot and Thomas Ady), its practical existence was tainted by its associations with sectarian violence and extremism.68 This said, the immedicacy of witchcraft, if purified of these associations and given the cachet of experimental natural philosophy, held out the possibility of fighting-off atheism and enthusiasm in ways that had been difficult to sustain with discussions about miracles.

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^65 See for example The Christian Virtuoso, Part 2 in Boyle, Works, Vol.6, p.751. Boyle noted that spirits and ‘inmaterial substances’ no more implied an angel or a demon that ‘unspiritual’ substances implied a cloud or an animal.

^66 The Christian Virtuoso, Part 2 in Boyle, Works, Vol.6, p.727. Though Boyle (as we have seen in the previous chapter) expressed a hesitant interest in popular astrology, he was keen to separate it from any notion of a ‘Spirit of Nature’.

^67 Cited in Duffy, p.269
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This certainly was the hope of Joseph Glanvill. As he noted in the preface to *A Blow at Modern Sadducism* (1668),

...things remote, or long past are either not believed, or forgotten: where as these being fresh and near, and attended with all circumstances of credibility, it may be expected they should have the more success upon the obstinacy of Unbelievers.  

More specifically, both he and Henry More (with whom he worked) aimed to counter the threat posed by John Webster’s suggestion that witchcraft was caused by ‘occult’ though non-demonic factors – his 1677 *The Displaying of Supposed Witchcraft* having been a major impetus behind More’s decision to publish an augmented version of Glanvill’s work in 1681 – and by a series of materialist or dualist philosophers. In this last instance, More’s own response can be traced through a series of broadsides levelled first at Hobbes, then at Descartes (his initial attachment to Cartesianism shattered), and finally at Spinoza. Of these men, it was Hobbes (whom he described as ‘that confident Exploder of Immaterial Substances’) who posed the greatest ongoing danger to More and it is notable to see that as late as the 1680s More continued to rail against ‘Hobbists’. Though More may not have understood the complexities of Hobbes’ work (certainly he ignored Hobbes’ own fear of anarchy) there is much to suggest that both he and Glanvill connected Hobbes’ rejection of witches and Hell and his derogatory views on priests (these matters being dealt with explicitly in parts three and four of *Leviathan*), with atheism and disorder. As More put it, ‘For assuredly that Saying was nothing so true in Politicks, No Bishop, no King; as this is Metaphysicks. No Spirit, no God.’ Though both he and Glanvill thought that real witches should be punished, neither author was trying to stir the populace towards a witch-hunt. They wished people to believe in the existence of witches only as a preventative against the far greater disease of atheism.

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69 Reproduced in Joseph Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus; or, Full and Plain Evidence Concerning Witches and Apparitions*, (1689), p.63
71 Other threats included the ‘Atheistical’ writings of Cardano, Pomponazzi and Vanini. See for example *An Antidote Against Atheisme*, (1653), p.157
72 Henry More, *The Immortality of the Soul*, (1659), p.64
73 Henry More, *An Antidote Against Atheisme*, (1653), p.164. For Glanvill’s comments see Coudert, p.120
To this end More in his *Antidote Against Atheisme* (1653) countered Hobbes' assertion that Devil and all his witches were nothing but 'phantasmes' by turning to a series of neo-Platonic, cabalistic and magical authors (these being sources that would only have confirmed Hobbes' view that the belief in witchcraft consisted of 'uncertain traditions' and the 'reliques' of Greek paganism), and then to accounts of witchcraft cases in order to show both the metaphysical possibility and the present day reality of the spirit world. Though two of the cases he cited (the examination of John Winnich of Huntingdonshire and Anne Bodenham of Wiltshire) had taken place within More's lifetime, many of the others that he cited came from such sixteenth-century authors as Paracelsus, Wier and Bodin. Texts by these authors had been translated and vulgarised on numerous occasions making More's approach no more empirical than any of his mid-century contemporaries. In fact it is apparent from his *Antidote Against Atheisme* and his later *Immortality of the Soul* (1659) that More was, at this time, attempting to provide a largely intellectual rebuttal to the threat of atheism.

This intellectual approach was only ever augmented, and not replaced, by the attempt that he and Glanvill made to apply an empirical method to their work. As Allison Coudert notes, 'the pull of metaphysics' particularly in the form of the idea of mystical illumination that he found in the third century neo-Platonist Plotinus 'was too strong for More to stick to what he actually observed.' Unable truly to credit the testimony delivered by the sensory perceptions of his witnesses above that of his own innate ideas, More was an unlikely candidate for the experimental method as understood by his contemporaries. Certainly his desire to give neo-Platonic explanations for events such as the flight of the witch Julian Cox would have worried such voluntarists as Boyle (any reference to the astral body required God's constant intervention), while at the same time providing weight for such men as Webster who saw natural explanations as just as plausible as metaphysical ones.

Equally telling were the difficulties posed by Glanvill's and More's use of scepticism and empiricism. Though these methods were intended to free witchcraft from its association with popular credulity — Glanvill noted for example that 'a single relation for an
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Affirmative, sufficiently confirmed and attested, is worth a thousand tales of forgery and imposture, from whence an universal Negative cannot be concluded' – this, in the event, proved impossible, not least because in refusing to present any detailed examples in which they rejected a claim regarding witchcraft and the spirit world, he and More ruled out any real possibility of demonstrating their scepticism. It is also clear that in appealing solely to the testimony of supposedly credible witnesses (a category which included justices of the peace, rectors, and bishops) Glanvill and More ignored the possibility that for physiological reasons their witnesses might indeed have been deceived in their senses.

Having stressed that their 'stories' would be told 'without humour', one of the most devastating features of the response towards Glanvill and More was the way in which their researches, and in particular their treatment of 'The Drummer of Tedworth' (a demonic knocking sound which was supposed to have inhabited a house in Somerset) were subjected to just the sort of raillery and wit that they had hoped to avoid. From Thomas Shadwell's *The Lancashire-Witches* (1682) to Joseph Addison's *Tedworth Drummer* (1725) and William Hogarth's 1762 engraving 'Credulity, Superstition and Fanaticism' laymen, and not a few irreverent clerics, laughed at the exploits of More, Glanvill, and (in the case of Hogarth) the 'enthusiasm' of John Wesley.

This is not to say that mockery was the universal response towards their work. *Saducismus Triumphatus* went through multiple editions in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries and a heavily annotated copy of the 1681 edition suggests that at least one reader was interested in tying his reading of (amongst others) Epiphanius, Felix, Plato, and Michael Psellus to the writings of More and Glanvill. But it was a growing trend which was probably compounded by the puffed-up attempts of those who tried to sustain a belief in witchcraft. Indeed a mounting level of irreverence during the

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76 Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, (1689), p.87. Glanvill's comments are a close match for the warning he had received from Boyle in September 1677 (see Boyle, *Works*, Vol. 6, pp.57-8) stating that 19 out of 20 cases of witchcraft are fraudulent 'yet any one relation of a supernatural phenomenon being fully proved, and duly verified, suffices to evince the thing contended for; and, consequently, to invalidate some of the atheists plausiblest arguments'.

77 Glanvill, *Saducismus Triumphatus*, (1689), p.87. Glanvill in his *A Blow at Modern Sadducism*, (1668), p.152 noted the power of 'jests and loud laughter' to degrade 'the most potent of demonstrations'.

78 British Library shelf mark CUP.701.dd.22. This particular copy of the text also includes extracts from Origen of Alexandria leaving open the possibility that the author (in common with Glanvill and More) questioned the idea of eternal damnation.
1670s and 1680s and a fear for his own gentlemanly status may have been reasons why Boyle, who supported Glanvill's project and collected his own set of witchcraft narratives, suppressed the intended publication of the second part of his *Strange Reports* (1691) noting in his Latin manuscript that 'we live in a century where self-righteous people believe that they can content themselves with contempt and derision as regards stories about supernatural phenomena' and ruing (as he had done in an earlier letter to Glanvill), the that fact 'men of active minds cannot easily be induced to believe in miracles, as there have been impostors and various frauds.'\(^79\) Likewise, the Royal Society, which received and would continue to receive numerous accounts of ghosts and apparitions, may have tried to retrieve its public face by giving its imprimatur to Webster's book. It would, however, take until the mid-eighteenth century and the ransacking of the Royal Society's archives by its secretary Thomas Birch before the reputation of Boyle would even begin to recover from the blow that had been delivered by works such as Swift's *Meditation upon a Broom-stick* (1704). When this happened it was as part of a much wider attempt to steer the Royal Society away from the interest in special providence and messianic prophecy that had coloured its time under the presidency of Issac Newton.\(^80\)

Locke

Treating witchcraft in the manner proposed by Glanvill and More was flawed on both epistemological and political grounds. Not only was it impossible to investigate that which physically did not exist and therefore could not be witnessed (anyway, according to Hobbes, knowledge could not be produced this way), any attempt to do so would only end in the abuse of power by the clergy (for whom Glanvill and More would have

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\(^79\) Royal Society BP 21, p.117. I am grateful to Professor Michael Hunter for providing me with a copy of Boyle's Latin text as part of his unpublished paper, ‘Magic, Science and Reputation: Robert Boyle, the Royal Society and the Occult in the Late Seventeenth Century’. Professor Hunter's treatment of the subject in this paper has been salient to my discussion here. Boyle at this time also withdrew his support for Peter du Moulin's translation of François Perraud's *Devill of Mascon* (1658). The text had included a preface by him.

been regarded as toadies) and the state. It smacked of what, by the 1690s, would be known both by supporters of Hobbes and by many others, as 'priestcraft'.

As Mark Goldie has recently argued, the roots of this wider antagonism can be traced back to the Act of Uniformity in 1662 (or even earlier if one wishes to include the opposition against Laud) and the belief that the episcopate was using its sacerdotal powers in a way that was at odds with the spirit of healing embodied in the Restoration. Certainly there is evidence, in works such as Francis Osborne's *Advice to a Son* (1656) and John Eachard's *Grounds and Occasions of the Contempt of the Clergy* (1670), of a growing concern for the duplicity of the clergy towards the laity. Osborne's work in particular carried the complaint that the clergy were attempting to puzzle the laity by turning religion into a mystery. Likewise, there was in the first Earl of Shaftesbury's *A Letter from a Person of Quality to his Friend in the Country* (1675) and in the response towards the earl of Danby's 'church party', much to suggest a dual-fronted, and, for the episcopate, highly undesired attack on religious intolerance and (because the two issues were in no way incompatible), popery.

While attacks such as these centred around constitutional questions regarding the relationship between politics and religion, they also encapsulated and sparked off issues and questions which were pertinent to medicine and which would have a long-lasting effect on its portrayal. If (as was suggested by some critics) religion had been corrupted by superstition, then by what process had this occurred? To what degree were cognitive factors involved? Had there really been a 'pure', 'primitive' religion? Would one part of the populace always be credulous and superstitious? Some of the most potent and influential answers to these questions came from a man for whom (like Hobbes before him) politics was inseparable from the philosophy of mind – the physician and political theorist John Locke (1732-1704).

Though space does not allow for a fuller treatment of the background to Locke's work it is worth noting some of the factors that helped forge his attitude towards credulity and popular belief. Notable amongst these were his response towards the chaos and

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81 The specifics of Hobbes' complaint are dealt with in Shapin and Schaffer, *Leviathan and the Air-Pump*, chapter 7 passim.
'enthusiasm' of the Civil War and the subsequent development of his ideas after the Restoration. While in the first instance he developed a great desire for political order (as seen in his unpublished 1660-61 'Two Tracts on Government' and its assertion of the magistrate's right to impose a uniform religion on the populace), in the second, this matured (perhaps under the influence of his patron the first Earl of Shaftesbury) into a dislike for priestcraft and a wish for religious tolerance. Working under the freedoms born of the Glorious Revolution in 1688 he published *Two Treatises of Government* (the text being published anonymously in 1690) and then, after the lapse of the Licensing Act in 1695, *The Reasonableness of Christianity as Delivered in the Scriptures* (1695).

In common with his contemporaries, he looked to Biblical and to ancient history in order to draw parallels with recent events. He described in *The Reasonableness of Christianity* how, prior to Christ's mission, the populace had 'through the works of nature' managed to gain some idea of a deity only to be blinded by 'foolish rites' and by 'sense and lust'.

In this state of darkness and ignorance of the true God, vice and superstition held the world. Nor could any help be had, or hoped for from reason; which could not be heard, and was judged to have nothing to do in the case; the priests, every where, to secure their empire, having excluded reason from having everything to do in religion. And in the crowd of wrong notions, and invented rites, the world had lost sight of the one only true God.

Importantly, it was the priesthood (and like many others Locke identified the Egyptians as culprits) who had encouraged polytheism among the unreasoning multitudes while they themselves maintained a monotheistic form of belief. Likewise, it had been the wise amongst the Greeks who had clung to reason, extolling the philosophy of Plato, while the vulgar had been lost in a sea of superstitious rites and sacrifices. It was, according to Locke, only through Christ's miracles and his apostles' preaching that darkness and vice were dissipated and the 'one invisible true God' known. Christ's miracles had been 'done in all parts so frequently, and before so many witnesses of all sorts, in broad day-light' that they could be regarded as 'matters of fact'. They presented any reasonable man or woman with plain enough evidence for the truth of Christianity; for like Boyle, Locke believed that a Christian's belief should be based neither on credulity nor on the overt application of reason to religion, just a simple common-sense approach to Scripture. Though he did not express a firm view on the issue of sacraments
and rites — this having been dealt with in his earlier *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690) — the implication was that man could well do without them.\(^{84}\)

Intertwined with Locke's views on religion were his thoughts on human cognition. Man has no innate idea of God. At birth his mind is a *tabula rasa*. However, he does have 'Sense, Perception, and Reason' and with these, 'a clear perception of his own Being.' Man is able to consider himself and the world around in ways that make him aware of both his own fallibility and, by of his intuitive ability to contrast ideas, God's existence as 'a most perfect Being'.\(^{85}\) Faith in this way is grounded in reason. With this in hand, Locke made a distinction between truths as they pertained to nature and truths as they pertained to faith. While the senses could provide man with knowledge about nature they had their limits. Man could be fooled both by his senses (which were prone to physiological complaints), and, more tellingly, by the opinions of others. Empirical knowledge could only ever be treated as probable and not as certain. In contrast, truths as they pertained to faith had to be established through divine revelation: either of an 'Immediate' kind (as had been the case with Christ's miracles) or of a 'natural' kind (i.e. through Scripture). Man applied his reason to miracles by looking for outwards signs which told him whether they were from God or (because Locke countenanced the possibility), from Satan.\(^{86}\)

According to Locke, enthusiasts were people who confused the probable knowledge that could be obtained through their senses with the certainties of divine revelation. What they thought was the light of inner illumination was no more than fancy. Likewise, superstition occurred when people abandoned their own reason in favour of the 'Extravagant Opinions and Ceremonies' of others.\(^{87}\) His philosophy was a clarion call for people to reason for themselves (he drew a stern comparison between those who swallowed down opinions 'as silly People do Empiricks Pills') and put their trust in Scripture when it came to matters of religion.\(^{88}\) Echoing Thomas Browne's earlier

\(^{83}\) *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, in *The Works of John Locke*, Vol. 6, pp.135-6


\(^{85}\) Locke, *Essay*, Book 1, ch.4 (p.89)

\(^{86}\) Locke, *Essay*, Book 4, ch. 16 (p.668)

\(^{87}\) Locke, *Essay*, Book 4, ch. 19 (p.699)

\(^{88}\) Locke, *Essay*, Book 4, ch. 19 (p.709); cf. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, p.410. 'For it is with the mysteries of our Religion, as with wholesome pills for the sick, which swallowed down whole, have the vertue to cure; chewed, are for the most part cast up again without effect.'
attitude towards human fallibility and vulgar opinion, he noted the dangers of 'giving up our Assent to the common received Opinions, either of our Friends, or Party; Neighbourhood, or Country.' 'There is', as he put it, 'no Errour to be named, which has not had its Professors: And a man shall never want crooked Paths to walk in, if he thinks that he is in the right way, where-ever he has the Foot-steps of others to follow.' This, however, was where his similarities with Browne ended. For while Browne had sought to ground his faith in a mystical conception of God, Locke located his in reason.®

Locke's philosophy of mind was a powerful weapon against the belief in witches and witchcraft. Spirits (and Locke was doubtful as to whether this category included witches) were immaterial and could only be known through revelation and not through the senses. As he noted,

> We have ground from revelation, and several other Reasons, to believe with assurance, that there are such Creatures: but our Senses not being able to discover them, we want the means of knowing their particular Existences. For we can no more know that there are finite Spirits really existing, by the Idea we have of such Beings in our Minds, that by the Ideas one has of Fairies, or Centaur, he can come to know, that Things answering those Ideas, do really exist.®

If people believed in "Goblins, Spectres, and Apparitions" it was because of a false idea or, and this was more likely, an incorrect association of ideas. People confused what they heard or read about (in places other than Scripture) with material reality. Children, their minds like blank wax tablets, were, in later life, likely to confuse natural phenomena with the witches and ghosts they had heard about from their 'foolish' nurses and maids.®

While Locke, who wrote Some Thoughts Concerning Education in 1692, believed that they should be taught about spirits in order to keep them from materialism, he thought that this form of education was best delivered from Scripture and at a time when the child was 'ripe for that sort of knowledge.®

Cultural bifurcation along Enlightenment lines

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89 Locke, Essay, Book 4, ch. 19 (pp.718-9)
90 Locke, Essay, Book 4, ch. 11 (p.637)
91 Locke, Essay, Book 2, ch. 23 (p.397)
Witches and spirits were topics that Locke linked to children and childishness in ways that would have a lasting impact on later writers and critics. Aside from its later manifestation in children’ fairy-tales, the link between childishness and the supernatural in general would come to be seen, in the writings of ethnographers and anthropologists, as a representative of man’s earliest condition. Before this happened, much groundwork would be laid in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. Accepting, as Browne had done in the 1640s, that many errors were based on ancient fables, English writers, along with their counterparts in France and the Low Countries, began to draw connections between superstition and the abuse of political and religious power.

This was nowhere more evident than in the work of John Toland. An Irishman born of Catholic parents (he converted to Protestantism in his youth), and educated at the universities of Edinburgh and Leiden (where he came under the influence of Jean Le Clerc and the exiled Locke), Toland absorbed and embellished both the radical and the more moderate influences of his day. He borrowed heavily from the work of Charles Blount (1659-93) and, because he had been an influence on Blount, Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1583-93). Both authors had been fascinated by ancient religions, and, in the case of Blount, the use of man’s natural fear of the unknown to create fables with which to keep the vulgar in order. Likewise, it is also likely, as Margaret Jacob and Justin Champion have suggested, that Toland picked up on and then circulated the vituperative attacks on priestcraft and superstition that had been made by Giordano Bruno in his \textit{Spaccio della Bestia Triumphante} (1584).

Locke’s work provided a starting point for much of Toland’s writing. The first of his \textit{Letters to Serena} (1704) began with Locke’s account of the way in which ignorance and superstition were spread, as if with milk and blood, from mothers, midwives, servants, and nurses (in most cases ‘Ignorant Women of the meanest vulgar’), to their children and charges. The ‘ridiculous Observations’ of priests, the ‘jargon of lawyers’, the ‘prejudices’ of the university, and the ‘mysteries of state’ were, in Toland’s opinion,

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\begin{enumerate}
\item Further biographical details can be found in R.E. Sullivan, \textit{John Toland and the Deist Controversy}, (Cambridge MA and London: Harvard University Press, 1982). Sullivan notes both Toland’s exposure to radical political circles in London and his participation in coffee-house culture.
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only a continuation of what people had been inured with since birth. Astrology, angels, spirits, mysterious rites, the immortality of the soul, and fables about Hell, all played on the fear of death and the credulity of the simple. These were errors which were spread by the learned with the intention of controlling or, in the case of ministers and their ‘pretended Miracles’, draining the pockets of the credulous. Repeating Pliny’s criticism of the Egyptian and Chaldean magi, Toland noted how much the same was true of medical practitioners whom, with their herbs, minerals, and ‘occult qualities’, carried with them the pretence of the divine in order to rob the ignorant.95

As Locke had done in his Reasonableness of Christianity, Toland paid special attention to late antiquity and early Christianity. Where Locke had identified in Christ’s revelation a light that dispelled the forces of darkness, Toland saw only superstition. Rather than breaking with the pagan past, the early church fathers had perpetuated it: first by adopting arguments from Cicero — an author whose De Divinatione had, in Toland’s view, done as much as anything else to perpetuate the belief in omens; and then by using altars, images and incense in much the same way as the Romans and Greeks had done. In common with a number of other Enlightenment figures — and one thinks here of Fontenelle (whose 1686 Histoire des Oracles also had a profound effect on English writers), Toland demanded to know how anyone, let alone a believing Christian, could look to the classical past for an example?96

The only strength that the classical past had was in what it might teach us about the interaction between of superstition and political power. Citing Socrates, Epicurus and Lucretius, Toland described, first in his Letters to Serena and then in his Pantheisticon, sive formula celebrandae sodalitatis Socraticae (1720), an ancient form of cultural bifurcation. A learned élite, fearful of what the rabble might do if the superstitions of the priesthood were exposed, had used hieroglyphics to keep their monotheism a secret. While the majority of the population had worshipped idols they had found religious rites and ceremonies to be unnecessary for their understanding of God. Monotheism had had a profound influence on their ability to understand the natural world. While the vulgar had demanded mystical explanations for everything, they had looked to ‘ordinary Laws

95 John Toland, Letters to Serena, (1704), p.79
96 Toland, Letters to Serena, p.111
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of nature.' Put in the modern context: the élite could understand Copernicus' system, the vulgar could only sit and gape.97

Toland's attitude towards present day superstition was ambiguous. In common with his ancient predecessors he recognised he dangers posed by the mob. 'We shall be in Safety', he remarked, 'if we separate ourselves from the multitude; for the Multitude is a Proof of what is worst.'98 As followers of a simple sort of monotheism he and his fellow Deists (John Trenchard and Henry St. John, Viscount Bolingbroke also espoused a "twofold philosophy"99) could take the religious and philosophical high ground while the priests kept the people in check. This said, there was the feeling that priestcraft, which was so unpopular with Deists and Whigs generally, could not be sustained forever. A new civic theology was required that combined religion with attention to the public good. This is what Toland proposed in his Clidophonis; or, of the Exoteric and Esoterick Philosophy, a text he published in the same year as his Pantheisticon.100

Debunking miracles

Locke had demystified Christianity by making the 'assent' that was given by man's reason the basis for his belief in divine revelation. Intentionally or not — and there is plenty in his notebooks to suggest that for all his outward conformity Locke was an Arian — he had indicated that the Trinity was unreasonable and that a priesthood was superfluous to man's ability to understand Scripture.101 Locke's ideas caused a storm as churchmen such as Robert South defended man's innate sense of morality and the divine against Locke's suggestion that man was born only with reason, while others such as Stillingfleet (himself an adherent to the 'reasonableness' of Christianity) stood their ground on the Trinity.102 In the case of his treatment of miracles Locke faced an accusation from the moderate churchman William Fleetwood that he had made a circular argument for the existence of miracles. Rather than revelation giving grounds for 'assent' it was,

97 Toland, Letters to Serena, p.114; idem, Pantheisticon, English translation, (1751), p.56
98 Toland, Pantheisticon, (1751), p.5
99 The term is Frank Manuel's. For the 'twofold philosophy' more generally see his The Eighteenth Century Confronts the Gods, (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 1959), pp.65-7
100 On this point see Champion, p.168
101 On Locke's notebooks see Sullivan, p.79. The doctrine of Arius (3rd to 4th century A.D.) held that the Son, though divine, was created by the Father and was thus a subordinate, non-eternal being.
102 On the responses of South and Stillingfleet see Yolton, John Locke, pp.38-9 and pp.132-40
according to Fleetwood’s reading of Locke, an *a priori* belief in the teachings of Christ that made divine revelations genuine. Locke countered in his *Discourse of Miracles* (the text was published posthumously in 1704) by insisting that rather than giving the lie to Christian miracles, context, and in particular, the presence of signs (Old Testament prophecies for New Testament miracles) was an indispensable way of differentiating between divine and non-divine miracles.\(^\text{103}\)

Deists took and expanded on opportunities that had been offered both by Locke’s work and by the criticisms of orthodox Christians. Toland in his *Christianity Not Mysterious* (1696) pushed for ‘reason not revelation’ in all things including religion. Revelation was a ‘Mean of Information’ and not assent. As he put it, ‘we cannot in this world know anything but by Our common Notions’. To do otherwise and rely on authorities of whatever kind (Toland drew few distinctions between Scripture and old wives’ tales) was laziness itself.\(^\text{104}\) Whereas Locke, Evelyn, and Boyle had seen as inadequate the simple monotheism that they detected in man’s earliest appreciation of nature, Toland saw this approach as the only real basis for religion. His view was shared by his fellow Deist Matthew Tindal (1655-1733). Writing in his *Christianity as Old as the Creation; or the Gospel, a Republication of the Religion of Nature* (1730) Tindal rejected as odious the possibility that God, in withholding Scripture until the coming of Christ, had denied primitive man the means to his own salvation. All that had ever been required was for man to consult the ‘Book of Nature’. According to the English Deists and their counterparts in France, evidence for primitive Deism could be found among the Chinese, the Indians, and the Persians. Likewise, its decline into superstition and ceremony could be detected in Greek paganism, in the Chinese belief in monster gods, and in American devil worship.\(^\text{105}\) It might even, as was suggested in the previous chapter, be found in the ‘gentilisme’ of English peasants. Rather than providing a marker against which the superiority of revealed Christianity could be asserted, this comparative approach to religion – based as it was on an explosion in travel writing and a growing interest in the history and culture of other peoples – was now being used to tear at its foundations.

At the same time the very status of Scripture was being brought into question and with it the possibility of supernatural healing of any sort. Following a line supposedly set down

\(^{103}\) Burns, pp.66-67 and pp.97-99; William Fleetwood, *An Essay upon Miracles*, (1702)

\(^{104}\) Toland, *Christianity Not Mysterious*, (1696), p. viii and pp.29-30

\(^{105}\) Manuel, p.63
by Origen of Alexandria, Thomas Woolston, a fellow of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge, suggested in his *Six Discourses on the Miracles of Our Saviour* (1727-1729) that it was impossible to view Christ's miracles as anything other than allegorical. As he noted in the last of these discourses,

...the Miracles of healing all manner of bodily Diseases, which Jesus was justly famed for, are none of the proper Miracles of the Messiah, neither are they so much as a good Proof of his Divine Authority to found a Religion.

The very openness of all miracles to abuse made them a flawed base upon which to build a religion. After all, noted Woolston, if

History affords us Instances of Men, such as Apollonius Tyanaeus, Vespasian, and of the Irish Stroker, Greatrex, who have miraculously cured Diseases to the Admiration of Mankind, as well as our Jesus... I humbly conceive, we ought not to give heed to him.\(^{106}\)

Ironically, given the way in which the abandonment of 'occult qualities' is usually associated with scientific change, neither Woolston, nor, more noticeably, his contemporary, the Whig propagandist John Trenchard, had any difficulty in using the language of vapours and spirits (Trenchard even referred to the writings of the neo-Platonist Giambattista della Porta) to explain miracles and the contagious superstition that they had produced. Fascinated, as Toland was, by the link between pain, superstition, and the fear of death, Trenchard remarked that, 'It requires less pains to believe a Miracle, than to discover it to be an Imposture, or account for it by the Powers of Nature.'\(^{107}\) As David Hume (himself critical of Deist ideas about primitive monotheism) would argue in his *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding* (1748), neither miracles, for which one could find no credible witnesses in Scripture or anywhere else, nor the fear of death, could provide a basis for religion. Among many other points of reference it would be his treatment of miracles, polytheism, and priestcraft, that percolated through to nineteenth-century discussions about superstition.\(^{108}\)

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\(^{107}\) John Trenchard, *The Natural History of Superstition*, (1709), p.26; *ibid.*, p.32

\(^{108}\) See for example E.B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture: Researches into the Development of Mythology, Philosophy, Religion, Language, Art and Custom*, (London: John Murray, 1875), Vol. 2, p.477. Dealing with the subject of animism, Tylor noted that Hume's *Natural History of Religion* is 'perhaps more than any other work the source of modern opinions as to the development of religion.' Hume's work was also picked up on by Andrew Lang in *The Making of Religion*, (London: Longmans & Co., 1898)
It was through changes in theological and political thinking that an intellectual backlash against possibility of intercessionary healing took place. As theologians and natural philosophers reiterated both the unlikelihood and the inherent undesirability of having the Creator intervene on man's behalf, so Deists and other freethinkers came to question the credibility of Scripture. This is of course not to say that the possibility of supernatural intervention disappeared. If anything, the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries saw, among both Conformists and Nonconformists, an increased emphasis on both ordinary providence — an appreciation for God's works that can be found in the writings of John Ray and William Derham — and special providence. Though open to political misuse and vulgar misinterpretation, it was within the context of an ordered universe, that the extraordinary (as found in comets and freak weather) could be used to assert God's right to intervene whenever He pleased. Likewise, it was through a continued emphasis on prayer that people of differing religious convictions affirmed the relationship between their bodily and spiritual health — asking, but not expecting, God to keep them from illness and pain. Once challenged and robbed (most notably through the work of Conyers Middleton) of the protection afforded by the patristics, Scripture would gain even greater importance in the eighteenth century as the currency of theological debate. Attacks on the Scriptural account of Christ's miracles would, in the Boyle lectures and elsewhere, be met by a reassertion of the reasonableness of Christianity.

Importantly it was not intellectual change alone that made for a rejection of supernatural healing but rather the way in which this change was mediated: through learned texts, popular pamphlets, newspapers, and broadsides; in coffee-houses, salons, scientific societies and (where people still attended), Church. Intellectual ideas appealed not just because of their internal content but because of the sensibilities and interests of the people to whom they were addressed. Concerned for the way in which a tag of superstition, enthusiasm, or vulgarity might effect their own sense of being, anything with these connotations was, as we shall see in the following chapter, abandoned with great haste.
Chapter 6

Taste

Wee have a Refin'd, Polite, and a Delicious Age, Whatever opposes what is Establishd here; is Rude, Barbarous, Deform'd: and whatever has a contrary Tast, is contemptible. The Standard of Good Sense, of Manners, Pleasure, Vertue, everything is here.

Anthony Ashley Cooper third Earl of Shaftesbury to John Locke September 8th 1694

...honest home-philosophy must teach us the wholesome practice within ourselves. Polite reading, and converse with mankind of the better sort, will qualify us for what remains.

Shaftesbury, *Soliloquy or Advice to an Author* (1710)

Introduction

Though not usually identified with changes in medicine itself, there is much in the work of the third Earl of Shaftesbury that was pertinent to the way in which medical culture as a whole came to be perceived in the course of the eighteenth century. Shaftesbury’s belief in the value of taste, sociability, and, above all, self-judgement was important to the way in which élites came to view the habits and behaviour of those around them. It touched on attitudes towards both knowledge itself and the correct place and manner in which it should be formed and discussed. Mediated through print and talked about by people of increasing wealth and mobility in the public forum of the coffee-house, the salon, and the marketplace, it was this emphasis on taste, originality, and social differentiation that drove people away from existing beliefs and practices.

This chapter is in three parts. The first part looks in greater depth at Shaftesbury’s views on taste and sociability, and at the contrasts that he drew between different types of ‘enthusiasm’. The second part examines the impact of Shaftesbury’s ideas on the urban world of the early eighteenth century. It looks at the growth of critical opinion and, in

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2 In *Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times, etc.*, edited with an introduction by John M. Robertson, 2 Volumes, (London: Grant Richards, 1900), Vol.1, p.234
Chapter 6

particular, the rejection of superstition. Finally, the effects of these developments are traced to a sample of eighteenth-century commonplace books, special attention being paid to changes in both content and form.

Enthusiasm and taste

Significantly, Shaftesbury's views on taste were, as Lawrence Klein describes in a recent study, centred around an aversion for those he termed the 'Empirick', the 'alchemist' and the 'modern philosopher'. Clearly it was not these 'characters' themselves whom Shaftesbury disliked but (in the tradition described in Chapter 1 of this thesis) what they represented. The 'Empirick', as he pointed out in a letter to his tutor John Locke and then in his *Soliloquy or Advice to an Author* (1710), is a man who tries his inventions on others without first testing them on himself. He is a man who claims to know the health of others but who in fact knows nothing about himself. Likewise, the 'modern philosopher' (whom he portrayed in the guise of an alchemist) is a man who claims to study science and nature but who is in fact closeted both by his library and by the language of metaphysics. Wrapped up in their own egoism Shaftesbury's characters were likely to attract the attention of superstitious rustics, enthusiasts, and others more accustomed to following the herd than forming their own opinions in the polite society.

Shaftesbury's first work, the anonymous *A Letter Concerning Enthusiasm* (1708) was levelled at the "French Prophets", a group of émigrés from the Cevennes who had arrived in England in September 1706 and who, on account of their millenarian preaching and prophetic pronouncements, attracted the attention of the Bishop of Gloucester Edward Fowler (a man who was willing to go into print in order to defend his belief in fairies), and the Boyle lecturer William Whiston. Religion was, in Shaftesbury's opinion, never so ridiculous as when it was treated in a solemn melancholy manner. Melancholy - a concept which he took from Robert Burton and from Ralph Cudworth's writings on 'pneumatophobia' - was a kind of panic or fear that was capable

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4 Characteristics, Vol.1, p.109; Klein, p.38
5 Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution 1689-1720*, pp.131-33 and pp.259-93. The context for Shaftesbury's letter is discussed in Heyd, "Be Sober and Reasonable", chapter 8, *passim*
of affecting every 'good Christian' who extended his faith 'so largely as to comprehend in
it not only all scriptural and traditional miracles, but a solid system of old wives' stories.'
Beginning with a false association of ideas (Shaftesbury was in this instance willing to
borrow from Locke), it spread, like a bodily contagion, by sympathy. 'The fury', as he
described it,

flies from face to face; and the disease is no sooner seen than caught. They who
in a better situation of mind have beheld a multitude under the power of this
passion, have owned that they saw in the countenances of men something more
ghostly and terrible than at other times is expressed on the most passionate
occasion. Such force has society in ill as well as in good passions: and so much
stronger any affection for being social and communicative.\(^7\)

Shaftesbury had little time for either popular opinion or for those who sought to harness
it for their own ends. While the 'mere vulgar' as he put it 'often stand in need of such a
rectifying object as the gallows before their eyes',

some modern zealots appear to have no better knowledge of truth, nor better
manner of judging it, than by counting noses. By this rule, if they call poll an
indifferent number out of the mob; if they can produce a set of Lancashire
noddles, remote provincial headpieces, or visionary assemblers, to attest a story
of a witch upon a broomstick, and a flight in the air, they triumph in the solid
proof of their new prodigy, and cry, \textit{magna est veritas et praevalebit!}\(^8\)

Though a staunch critic of those who read the classics in an uncritical manner (he
reserved particular disdain for the Earl of Rochester John Wilmot's egotistical Epicurean
morals), Shaftesbury's own political and moral ideas were heavily indebted to classical
thinking and in particular the ideas of virtue, tolerance, and political liberty that he
believed to be embodied within the 'ancient constitution'.\(^9\) An aristocrat himself,
Shaftesbury saw in modern attempts at popular government the fulfilment of earlier
warnings about the dangers of democracy, describing, with some distaste, the
"Disgracefull & Unseemly Meane and Vulgar Popular & Misceivouse ways & uses of
Government" in Carolina. Like "vulgar religion" with its "Sordid, Shamefull Nauseous

\(^6\) Characteristics, Vol.1, p.7. Shaftesbury's discussion of fear was also influenced by Henry More's
\begin{em}Enchiridion Ethicum\end{em} (1668). This said, and as Heyd (p.214, fn.11) notes, Shaftesbury believed
that in "other Regions" More was "perhaps as great an Enthusiast as any of those, whom he
wrote against."

\(^7\) Characteristics, Vol.1, p.13

\(^8\) Characteristics, Vol.1, p.98

\(^9\) Klein, pp.125-27
Idea of [a] Deity", vulgar politics was just another example of mass superstition and delusion.\textsuperscript{10}

Shaftesbury's proposed answer to these problems was neither the prohibition of discussion amongst the vulgar nor the abolition of their religion. After all, as he asked his readers of his \textit{Inquiry Concerning Virtue or Merit} (1709), "...what greater Sacrelege is there than that which removes the Notions of Deity out of the Minds of Men and introduces Atheisme?...If Modern Superstition disturb thee; be thankful that it is not the Indian & Barbarian; that [there] are not human Sacrifices; that they are not Druids."\textsuperscript{11} Basing his thinking on the works of Cicero, Marcus Aurelius and other Stoic writers, Shaftesbury suggested that man, as a rational creature, should exercise his power of self-reflection by asking himself whether he was free of the enthusiasm which he had detected in others. Only when he has done this should he go about discussing others. This should be done in witty, gentle or charitable manner, without chastisement (which, as with the Hobbesian fear of hell, Shaftesbury saw as inimical to the pursuit of virtue), so as to coax the enthusiast out of his error. Ridicule, if it was to be used at all, should be used only in private, among friends, and always with a "\textit{Sense of what is naturally graceful and becoming}".\textsuperscript{12} By encouraging Stoic introspection Shaftesbury hoped to bring out the innate goodness in people (it was on this issue of innate ideas that he differed most strongly from Locke) while at the same time avoiding the danger of imposing his opinions on others. So often in the past used to describe the actions and beliefs of others, 'enthusiasm' was, in the work of Shaftesbury, most closely related to the self; and with it, social differentiation.

Shaftesbury aimed at a culture of aesthetics, refinement, and taste. Just as ancient Greece had been the apogee of human liberty so too had it been a highpoint for the arts. A close follower of Platonic philosophy with its notions of beauty, harmony and perfect form, he encouraged "ladies, beaux, courtly gentlemen, [and] the more refined town and country wits" to take an interest in what Addison would term "the pleasures of the

\textsuperscript{10} Quoted in Robert Voitle, \textit{The Third Earl of Shaftesbury 1671-1713}, (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana University Press, 1984), p.58; \textit{ibid.}, p.147. Shaftesbury was referring to the mismanagement of the Carolina Colony under Seth Sothell in the early 1690s. Shaftesbury's grandfather (the first Earl) had been one of the eight original Lords Proprietors of the Carolina Colony appointed by Charles II in 1663.

\textsuperscript{11} Quoted in Voitle, p.148

\textsuperscript{12} Quoted in Voitle, p.331
imagination": fine architecture, painting and music. In order to counter the long held association between madness and the arts Shaftesbury drew, first in his Sociable Enthusiast (which was printed, but not published, in 1704) and then in his Letter Concerning Enthusiasm, a distinction between negative enthusiasm (of the sort he associated with religious visionaries) and a more positive “fair and plausible enthusiasm”. As long as it was based on hard training and strict reasoning, and practised by people of ‘good breeding’ (a category which, it goes without saying, excluded the village rustic and the provincial oaf), enthusiasm of this sort could only have positive effects. It was, as Shaftesbury noted, ‘a very natural honest Passion’ that all great orators, poets, musicians, philosophers possessed. Taste and enthusiasm ran hand in hand, as it was by recognising and then dominating one’s passions that an individual separated himself from the vulgar herd.

As was noted above in relation to the ‘modern philosopher’, Shaftesbury’s work contributed to a redefinition and a relocation of the locus of conversation and discussion. Man was (contra Hobbes) a sociable animal whose philosophical, political and intellectual interests deserved to be freed from the stuffy confines of the library, the laboratory, the cabinet of curiosities, and (because Shaftesbury’s political affiliations were closest to those of the Whigs) the Court, and the Church. Rather than studying alone (which led to melancholy) or meeting in secret (which was associated with priestcraft and intrigue) Shaftesbury wanted people of manners, breeding, politeness and leisure to meet and converse in secular public or civic places.

Though Shaftesbury’s work had known precedents both in the classical and the Italian humanist traditions, it was recognised as having its own particular impact. His collected writings, Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times went through ten different editions between its initial publication in 1711 and the end of the century. It was printed in German and French (in the last instance receiving particular praise from the editor of the Bibliothèque Universelle et Historique, Jean Le Clerc). It appealed to such Whigs as John Toland (a recipient of Shaftesbury’s patronage until he published the latter’s Inquiry without his permission), John Trenchard, and (allowing for the idiosyncrasies of his approach) Jonathan Swift. All revelled in Shaftesbury’s critique of superstition, arbitrary

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13 Quoted in Voidle, p.350; Addison coined the phrase in The Spectator, No.416, July 2nd 1712.
government, the Court and the Church. A Tory and a friend neither to superstition nor to the vulgar, Alexander Pope noted that Shaftesbury’s *Characteristics* had done “more harm to revealed religion in England than all the works of infidelity put together”. Pope himself picked up on many of the themes in Shaftesbury’s work. He commended the ‘Enthusiastic Spirit’ and poured scorn upon the dull and the unoriginal. As he remarked in his *Essay on Criticism* (1717),

> Some ne’er advance a Judgement of their own,  
> But catch the spreading Notion of the Town;  
> They reason and conclude by Precedent,  
> And own stale Nonsense which they ne’er invent.  
> Some judge of Authors’ Names, Not Works, and then  
> nor praise nor blame the Writings, but the Men...  
> ...The Vulgar thus through Imitation err;  
> As oft the Learn’d by being Singular,  
> So much they scorn the Crowd, that if the Throng  
> By Chance go right, they purposely go wrong;  
> So Schismatics the plain Believers quit,  
> And are but damn’d for having too much Wit.”

Vulgarity was, in Pope’s estimation, not just a label for those who clung to outdated opinions but also a way of describing urban neophytes who lacked imagination and constancy. Likewise, in Swift’s *Tale of a Tub* (1704), it was medical men with their fads, systems, and inflated prices, who came in for the toughest criticism.

It was, however, in the metropolis and then in the provinces that Shaftesbury’s call for a secular forum was answered. Already established by the early 1650s and buzzing by the 1670s, coffee-houses provided a place where those who could afford the beverage might meet, converse, and catch up on the news of the day. Coffee-house discussions there were not so much tasteful (indeed Shaftesbury’s ideals have only been partly met there) as sociable and critical. As Thomas Shadwell described, “Each coffee-house is fill’d with

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17 Quoted in Tucker, p.106. The original source is a letter from Pope to Cowper in which Pope discusses his poem ‘Eloisa to Abelard’.
subtle folk...who wisely talk and politicly smoke." They were one important feature of what Jürgen Habermas has, primarily in relation to the politics of eighteenth-century Britain, described as a ‘public sphere’ — a space outside the existing forum of the Church, the Court and the home: a space where people might talk and use their reason.

Coffee-houses were places where theatre, literature, fashion, medicine and natural philosophy might be debated and gossiped about. Indeed, as Larry Stewart has recently commented, there is much to suggested that coffee-houses, with their culture of exchange (this again being something which the aristocratic Shaftesbury would have disapproved of), were quickly redefining ‘the social space in which experimental philosophy was to be performed’. While in the 1660s Boyle, Hooke, Oldenburg, and other members of the Royal Society could be found discussing “philosophy” in Garraway’s coffee-house, by the beginning of the eighteenth century lectures on mathematics and natural philosophy were being given by such men as James Hodgson (a one time employee of the Astronomer Royal John Flamsteed) at the Jones’ Coffee-House in Cornhill, and by Francis Hauksbee (formerly a Royal Society demonstrator) at the Marine Exchange Coffee-House in London. These lectures were attended (much to the disgust of such elitists as Newton) by craftsmen, merchants, and traders and can be seen as one important aspect of the formation and popularisation of knowledge in this period.

While beneficial in this regard, there was much about coffee-houses that was inimical to the beliefs of Boyle and his friends. Censured by some as hangouts for puritans and republicans (they were, of course, also frequented by such Royalists as Christopher

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Wren and Anthony Wood), and by others as a threat to the male-dominated, beer-swilling politics of the tavern, coffee-houses were also lambasted, most notably in The Character of a Coffee-House, with the Symptômes of a Town-Wit (1673) as hotbeds of atheism and scoffing.\(^{25}\) Certainly, as the author Samuel Butler remarked, in the coffee-house opinions of all varieties might be heard as ‘each man seems a Leveller’. Debates at the Turk’s Head in London (a venue frequented by John Aubrey and Samuel Pepys) were ferocious with customers having the additional option of placing their ‘votes’ in a ‘ballot-box’.\(^ {26}\) Newspapers, journals, broadsheets, and such works as Shadwell’s The Lancashire-Witches (1682) or Butler’s Hudibras (1663), with its satirical attack on puritan enthusiasts, occultists, and natural philosophers, were there to be read and discussed. Already concerned with the destructive power of ‘jests and loud laughter’, public opinion of the sort found in coffee-houses was one reason why Boyle preferred not to make public his work on witchcraft and other supernatural phenomena. Indeed, public opinion as a whole may explain why, in the course of the eighteenth century, there was a general tailing-off in the publication of new works that attempted to take the supernatural seriously. Such works as John Beaumont’s Historical, Physiological and Theological Treatise of Spirits, Apparitions, Witchcrafts, and Other Magical Practices (1705) and Richard Boulton’s Compleat History of Magick, Sorcery, and Witchcraft (1715) were, in the main, treated with ridicule.\(^ {27}\)

### Journals

Of the literature mentioned above, journals were central to the way in which criticism of superstition and vulgarity spread. Published first in March 1711 by Richard Steele and Joseph Addison, The Spectator was extremely popular both in its initial run to 1714 (early in its publication Addison estimated that three thousand copies were being distributed every day) and in the many reprints that followed during the course of the eighteenth century. It was, claimed the poet John Gay, ‘in every one’s Hands, and a Constant

\(^{25}\) Pincus, p.816

\(^{27}\) Beaumont’s treatment of the subject borrowed heavily from Henry More. Both his work and that of Boulton came under fire in Francis Hutchinson’s Historical Essay Concerning Witchcraft (1718), p.xiv
Chapter 6

Topick for our morning Conversation at Tea-Tables, and Coffee Houses'. As with their earlier publication, *The Tatler* (1709-11), Addison and Steele sought to cultivate, improve upon and moderate the values and aspirations of their readers. If you read *The Spectator* then you were assumed to be a man or woman of taste and good humour! While aesthetics, common sense and the genteel values of political and religious tolerance were encouraged, superstition, dogmatism, ignorance and boorishness were laughed at or scorned.

The contrast drawn between those on 'the inside' and the those on the 'outside' could not have been stronger. Dealing with Cicero's *De Divinatione*, Addison commented,

*Notwithstanding these Follies are pretty well worn out of the Minds of the Wise and Learned in the Present Age, Multitudes of weak and ignorant Persons are still Slaves to them. There are Numberless Arts of Prediction among the Vulgar, which are too trifling to enumerate, and infinite Observations of Days, Numbers, Voices, and Figures, which are regarded by them as Portents and Prodigies. In short, every thing prophesies to the superstitious Man, there is scarce a Straw or a rusty piece of Iron that lies in his way by Accident.*

Though 'Wizards, Gypsies and Cunning Men' were 'dispersed through all the Countries and Market Towns of Great Britain', it was not these people that Addison sought chiefly to correct. Rather, he was concerned for those 'well-disposed' but at the same time, curious and even superstitious 'Persons in the Cities of London and Westminster' who 'in the ordinary Course of Life, lay any stress upon things of so uncertain, shadowy and chimerical a Nature'. *The Spectator* was, as he pointed out, a gentle warning to all those would-be correspondents from the 'Bedlam' of 'Moor-Fields'.

A similar approach was taken by Addison and Steele as they summarised such works as Pierre Bayle's *Dictionnaire Historique et Critique* (1697) and John Scheffer's *History of Lapland* (1674). Magic, visions, fairies and 'Second sight' (a topic that had intrigued Aubrey and Boyle) were examples of the false wit that created 'humane misery' for those who believed in them. What could be more tragic yet at the same time hilarious than the

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29 Addison to Steele, *The Spectator*, (ed.) Bond, October 9th 1712, No.505, Vol.4, pp.292-93

'most ridiculous Piece of natural Magick...taught by no less a Philosopher than Democritus'? How could the learned Pliny believe that the blood of birds when mixed together would produce a serpent that would give the gift of languages to whoever ate it?  

Written in July 1712 shortly before the trial of Jane Wenham (an elderly woman and the last person in England to condemned to capital punishment for witchcraft at an assize court), a series of Spectator articles on 'Sir Roger' and 'Moll White' both laughed at and, above all, questioned the treatment of those accused of witchcraft. 'When an old Woman begins to doat, and grow chargeable to a Parish', noted Addison,

she is generally turned into Witch, and fills the whole Country with extravagant Fancies, imaginary Distempers, and terrifying Dreams. In the mean time, the poor Wretch that is the innocent Occasion of so many Evils begins to be frighted at her self, and sometimes confesses secret Commerces and Familiarities that her Imagination forms in a delirious old Age. This frequently cuts off Charity from the greatest Objects of Compassion, and inspires People with a Malevolence towards those poor decrepid Parts of our Species, in whom Human Nature is defaced by Infirmity and Dotage.

Though a belief in the existence of spirits was for Addison, as it was for Locke and Hutchinson (who detailed the Wenham case in his 1718 Historical Essay Concerning Witchcraft), important to every good Christian’s faith, experience had taught him that the ill-treatment of elderly people suffering from what might well have been faults of the imagination, far outweighed any real maleficium on the part of supposed witches. Spectator readers were urged to exercise compassion, both as a means of ridding witchcraft trials of their ‘wretchedness and disgrace’, and as a way of separating themselves from the ‘barbarous’ herd. If it had to exist at all, then witchcraft should be confined to ghost or spirit stories which would ‘raise a pleasing kind of Horrour in the Mind of the Reader, and amuse his Imagination with the Strangeness and Novelty of the Persons who are represented in them’ and (pace Locke) to ‘bring up into our Memory the Stories we have heard in our Child-hood, and favour those secret Terrours and Apprehension to which the Mind of Man is naturally subject.’ Beyond the realm of physical reality and,

31 Addison to Steele, The Spectator, (ed.) Bond, October 8th 1714, Vol.5, p.64; *ibid.*, October 17th 1712, No.512, Vol.4, pp.319-20
following the repeal of the Witchcraft Act in 1736, outside the law, the ‘noble Extravagance of Fancy’ could, like Shaftesbury’s ‘noble Enthusiasm’, be put to positive uses in the world of theatre, literature and drama.  

**Popular Medicine**

Though critical of the credulity that was displayed with regards to witchcraft and miraculous healing, neither *The Spectator* nor any of the other prominent journals of the early eighteenth century (and one thinks here both of *The Tatler* and, since 1731, of Edward Cave’s *Gentleman’s Magazine*) led an outright assault on lay medicine. Of course cures such as ‘holy oil’ and spittle and remedies for the King’s Evil were condemned as popish and vulgar much in the way that they would have been condemned a hundred years previously (albeit now they carried the additional mark of Jacobitism). Yet there was little in the way of criticism towards herbal and mineral medicines of the sort found in the recipe and commonplace books of the first half of the seventeenth century. In fact, as Roy Porter has detailed, by advocating openness, self-help and public utility (all enlightenment keywords), such journals as the *Gentleman’s Magazine* did much to bring into the public forum those medical recipes that were once kept mainly within the private world of family and friends.

Both laymen and paid medical practitioners who read the *Gentleman’s Magazine* were encouraged either to seek advice from ‘Mr URBAN’ or to proffer their own cures. Once received, little reference was made to a recipe’s source and in most cases the author was identified only by his initials, by a pseudonym, or, occasionally, by his occupation. Personal experience was valued and it was thought better ‘for humane reasons’, ‘to try a doubtful cure than none at all’. One anonymous correspondent who suffered from cramp felt that having tried unsuccessfully ‘various remedies, such as Balsam of Peru,
rosemary, holding a clod of brimstone during the fit', and tying eel-skins about his legs, 'humanity' obliged him to communicate to others the simple cure of raising the incline of one's bed.\textsuperscript{36} Aside from innovations such as this, and references to the growing number of therapeutic baths and spas, the \textit{materia medica} mentioned in recipes sent to the \textit{Gentleman's Magazine} were, in themselves, much the same as those found in earlier, private collections. Leeches were recommended for headache, oil of amber was to be rubbed on the joints of those who suffered from cramp, and the corns and parings of a horse were to be given, morning and night, to those with cancer.\textsuperscript{37} These cures were 'secular' (in the sense that they made no reference to religion or magic) but at the same time 'popular'. Correspondents often made positive references to such older texts as Culpeper's \textit{English Physician} (which was reprinted numerous times in the eighteenth century), tying the advice they found there to their own personal experience.\textsuperscript{38} As self-medication was emphasised so too was the ability of the patient to choose his practitioner. New medical works were reviewed by the journal's lay editors and commented upon by its readers.

Taken as a whole, it was in fact the aspiring medical man rather than the superstitious layman who most stood to lose from the activities of the journalists. Both the \textit{Tatler} and \textit{The Spectator} were ruthless in their mockery of dilettante doctors and their fashionable cures. 'If we look', noted Addison in a tone reminiscent of the earlier literature of 'characters', 'into the Profession of Physick, we shall find a formidable Body of Men; the sight of them is enough to make a Man serious, for we may lay it down as a Maxim, that when a Nation abounds in Physicians, it grows thin of People.'\textsuperscript{39} According to the \textit{Tatler}, 'Dr Badearzt' was a 'fashionable doctor who buzzes around the mineral springs of Bath, Epsom and Tunbridge Wells', killing men and women with his 'humanity'. His patients ('vapid' ladies suffering from what George Cheyne would term 'the English malady' of good-breeding, vapours and spleen) were as ridiculous as he.\textsuperscript{40} Also burlesqued were the attempts by the physicians Daniel Le Clerc and John Freind (a Tory who did time in the Tower for his part in Bishop Atterbury's abortive plot to restore the

\textsuperscript{36} \textit{Gentleman's Magazine}, Vol.32, (1762), pp.218-9
\textsuperscript{37} \textit{Gentleman's Magazine}, Vol.32, (1762), pp.210-11; \textit{ibid.}, Vol.73, (1802), p.724
\textsuperscript{38} \textit{Gentleman's Magazine}, Vol.70, (1800), p.329
\textsuperscript{39} Addison to Steele, \textit{The Spectator} (ed.) Bond, March 24th 1711, Vol. 1, p.90. Also laughed at were the 'superfluous Members' of the Church and the 'chamber practice' of lawyers.
\textsuperscript{40} \textit{Tatler}, No.77 (October 6th 1709) cited in Fielding H. Garrison, 'Medicine in the \textit{Tatler}, \textit{Spectator}, and \textit{Guardian}', \textit{Bulletin of the History of Medicine}, Vol.2, No.8, (1934), p.489
Stuarts) to write histories of medicine. Their work, which contained long passages detailing the achievements of such 'singular and remarkable' physicians as Oribasius, Aetius, and Galen, without so much as a positive word for empirics, astrologers and Arab physicians, was criticised for its serious scholastic tone and its over-attention to the work of the ancients.

Addison and Steele recycled and improved upon many older, recognisable descriptions of quacks and nostrum sellers. Quacks remained theatrical characters – 'Learned men in Plush Doublets' who performed on a stage and preyed upon 'Ignorants of the lower Order' and 'Ignorant People of Quality' alike. They were 'Imposters' and 'Murderers', the 'Havock of the Humane Species, which is made by Vice and Ignorance'. Already laughed at on account of their ambiguous status and gender, quacks were, by the eighteenth century, derided for their faulty sense of beauty and taste. Though they sold cosmetics, cleansers, oils, and soaps, they could only ever 'pretend' to know women as objects of beauty and sex. Their secret remedies were now, more than ever, offensive to a public that was (for all its hypocrisy) interested in openness and transparency, and critical of naked self-interest.

Commonplace medicine

Seen in the light of these wider changes, commonplace books may be regarded as the antithesis of much that élite Enlightenment society claimed to stand for. They were examples of false wit, scholastic pedantry, and an unnecessary attachment to the platitudes of the ancients. What, asked Steele in the Spectator, could be more tedious and offensive than the 'Common-Place Talker'? Such men ruined civil discourse with

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41 Dictionary of National Biography article on 'John Freind'. Freind was on of the 'Black Gowns among my Enemies' mentioned in The Spectator (ed.) Bond, October 8th 1714, Vol. 5, p.66. Le Clerc's Histoire de la medecine ou l'on voit l'origine & le progrès de cet art, (Geneva, 1696) was translated as The History of Physic, or, an Account of the Rise and Progress of the Art, and the Several Discoveries therein from Age to Age. With Remarks on the Lives of the Most Eminent Physicians (London, 1699) by James Drake and Andrew Baden, two practitioners keen to gain favour with the College of Physicians.


'Old Topicks', 'Quotations out of Plays and Songs' and 'insignificant Laughs and Gestures'. It did not matter that Addison and Steele began most of their articles with a motto from Horace, or a quotation from Juvenal or Cicero, commonplaces (like proverbs) were either regarded as impolite — 'a man of fashion never has recourse to proverbs or vulgar aphorisms', Lord Chesterfield advised his son in the 1740s — or they were associated with the education of small children. Even in this last instance, respect for commonplaces and commonplace books was on the wane. As Steele (who sympathised with Locke's ideas on education) noted, 'There are many excellent Tempers which are worth to be nourished and cultivated with all possible Diligence and care, that were never designed to be acquainted with Aristotle, Tulli, or Virgil.' Children were to be freed of the 'tyranny' of the schoolmaster and the commonplace book, and taught to follow experience rather than Latin verse. Where, as in the case of John Ray's *Collection of English Proverbs* (1670), proverbs and phrases were collected, it was out of an interest in etymology and, as Ray put it, a desire to keep a record of that which is 'not now in common use', save among the vulgar, where they were 'generally known and well used'.

Beloved of such sixteenth or seventeenth-century polymaths as Scaliger, Alsted, and Hartlib, the very idea that one man would try and absorb the knowledge of the world was laughed at in the eighteenth century. Any attempt to do so could only end, wrote Laurence Sterne in reference to a 'TRISTRA-pedia' that had been devised by Tristram Shandy's father, in chaos. The emphasis was to be on wit and original thought and not on the accretion of dusty bits of information. A commonplace full of 'heads' was, wrote Swift in *A Tale of a Tub*, a sure sign that its bearer was himself, empty-headed.
Chapter 6

Though Shaftesbury compiled his own manuscript notes in the form of a commonplace book with headings for “deity”, “Mankind & Human Affairs”, “Self” and “Natural Affection”, commonplace books were no longer linked to state service and political culture in the way they had been a century or a century and a half earlier.\(^{51}\)

These considerations aside, there is evidence to suggest that commonplace books were in fact used, albeit in an altered form, until well into the eighteenth century. The changes that took place owed much to the growing dominance of print. As books became cheaper and more widespread, so people relied more on print and less on manuscript collections. Undoubtedly this change owed much to developments that had been taking place in the seventeenth century as such favourites as Thomas Lupton’s *Thousand Notable Things* and Hannah Woolley's *Compleat Servant-Maid; or the Young Maidens Tutor*, continued to go through multiple editions in the century that followed. Added to these works was a new body of texts written by men that aimed to teach women elements of literary style, grace, and decorum, while at the same time providing them with tips on housekeeping, cooking and domestic medicine. Published in 1704 *The Accomplish’d Female Instructor: or, a Very Useful Companion for Ladies, Gentlewomen, and Others* included sections on ‘the Art of Speaking well, Directions in Love...Affability, Courtesy and Humility’, ‘Charity’, ‘Prayer’, cooking, dyeing, and ‘physick’. Readers were provided with a ‘brief treatise of Religion shewing it in its Plainness, and how necessary it is to be practised’, and (though in no way connected) instructions for healing wounds that had been caused by ‘Blasts by Lightning’. While such afflictions could be cured with a plaster made with ‘ointment of Tobacco’, vinegar, ‘Doves-Dung’ and ‘Dung of Poultry’, ‘the best way to restore Health and Continue it’ was ‘Temperance, which Queen Elizabeth from the great Benefit she found by it, was us’d to call the noblest part of Physick’.\(^{52}\) Though lacking the rigid order which (in theory at least) characterised Renaissance commonplace books, printed collections such as this did continue in the mould of providing their readers by with simple, empirical advice.

Manuscript commonplace books also continued to be used, though here too, there were changes in their form and content. As we saw in Chapter 2, those members of the

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\(^{51}\) Voitle, *The Third Earl of Shaftesbury*, p.135
Chapter 6

Fairfax family who entered information into their commonplace book in the eighteenth century neglected to use any sort of ordering. As the humanistic system of education that underlay the keeping of commonplace books was slowly eroded so too was the rigour with which these texts were kept. Notably, it was men like the self-educated provincial excise officer John Cannon (1684-1743) who believed, by now incorrectly, that learned people kept commonplace books; a sign perhaps that the commonplace book itself was becoming 'vulgarised' over the course of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries.\(^53\) Certainly Ephraim Chambers made a point of aligning his *Cyclopaedia: or, an Universal Dictionary of Arts and Sciences* (1728) with the Renaissance interest in memory, assuring potential buyers that his method of cross-referencing would allow them to 'connect' otherwise diverse pieces of information with ease.\(^54\) Likewise, in the early nineteenth century Richard Phillips used a motto from Bacon in order to advertise his *A Million Facts...Serving as a Common-place Book of Useful reference on All Subjects* (1832). Locke, who at the request of Jean Le Clerc, had produced the article that would be published after his death as *A New Method of a Common-Place-Book* (1706), had his own system of classifying knowledge according to a series of two letter keywords vulgarised by those who wished to cash in on his reputation.\(^55\) *Bell's Commonplace Book, Form'd Generally upon the Principles Recommended and Practised by Mr. Locke* (1770) provided its users with pre-formatted pages into which they could enter choice snippets from their own extensive reading. Pages were available in folio, octavo, and 'pocket' quarto sizes and were pitched both at,

...the Divine, the Lawyer, the Poet, Philosopher, or Historian' and 'the man of business...the trader...in short...all those who would form a system of useful and

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\(^{52}\) *The Accomplish'd Female Instructor*, p.104; ibid., p.139; ibid., p.147


\(^{54}\) Chambers, *Cyclopaedia*, (1728), Vol.1, p.5

\(^{55}\) Locke suggested that index be formed by dividing two facing pages into twenty-five alphabetical squares (he regarded the letters j, k, v, w, and y as unnecessary), each of which would then be divided into five smaller sections. Keywords would be indexed according to their first letter and their first vowel, page numbers being entered into each of the boxes. He provided his readers with a sample page (see *Works* (1794), Vol.2, pp.442-3). As G.G. Meynell points out in 'John Locke’s Method of Common-Placing, as Seen in his Drafts and his Medical Notebooks', *Seventeenth Century*, Vol.8, (1993), pp.253-4, neither Locke nor those who adopted his method were particularly rigorous in applying it.
agreeable knowledge, in a manner peculiar to themselves, while they are following their accustomed pursuits, either of profit or pleasure.\(^{56}\)

Commonplace books were popular among the medical students that flooded the medical schools of first Edinburgh, and then London, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. London medical professor James Blundell suggested to his students that,

As the memory is perhaps, of all the mental faculties, that which becomes most speedily enfeebled, especially in those who labour much with the mind, it s [sic] necessary to have recourse to some expedient to secure your ideas, and an ‘adversaria’ is excellently adapted for this purpose. By the celebrated philosopher LOCKE, a form of common-place book has been proposed, which I have found, on trial, to answer eminently well.\(^{57}\)

Finally, The Medical Common Place-Book. Arranged upon a New Plan for Entering Particular Cases. With an Alphabetical Index of Upwards of Eight Hundred Heads, which Occur in General Reading and Practice (1824) was advertised as a means for students and practitioners to order ‘the principal points connected with their profession.’ While commonplace books did decline to a point at which they were remembered by W.H. Auden as being part of a ‘certain world’ that had passed, this decline from being a centrepiece of Renaissance humanism to being an object of nostalgic curiosity was perhaps slower than has hitherto been assumed.\(^{58}\)

Divided up alphabetically and used between the years 1768 and 1781, the commonplace book of the Halton family of Greystock, Cumberlandshire, reads like a synopsis of eighteenth-century provincial life. The text includes ‘Comments about Addison’, extracts from Montesquieu’s Spirit of the Laws, ‘Bacon’s Essays on Honour’, ‘Dr Donne’s verses’, and White Kennett’s Antiquities. Custom is described as ‘the law of fools’. Under an entry for ‘books’ one of the many authors of the text has added a note stating, ‘Manuscript or written Books before the inestimable invention of printing were so dear that none but the rich could purchase them.’\(^{59}\)


\(^{57}\) ‘Dr. Blundell’s Introductory Physiology Lecture, Theatre, Guy’s Hospital, Wednesday October 5th 1825’, The Lancet, Vol.9, (1825-26), p.117


\(^{59}\) Wellcome MS 2720, folios 20, 23, 35, 135, 66, and 34
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Though a fall in the cost of books undoubtedly meant that people no longer felt the need to make notes in a commonplace book (they simply took the required volume off the shelf), there is evidence to suggest that a 'scrapbook' mentality towards reading continued, either because people borrowed books from one another (or from one of the many travelling libraries that were set up at the end of the eighteenth century), or because they enjoyed the convenience of having their most important information in one volume. Writing of this sort may, if we wish, also be taken as an off-shoot of the eighteenth century's preoccupation with material production.

Notes from Edward Barry's Treatise on the Three Different Digestions (1709), 'an excellent Receipt for indigestion by Dr Randolph', and a homely recipe for 'a strong infusion of Horse Radish that powerfully attenuates and disengages the Phlegm and warms & strengthens the stomach', suggest that at least one of the Haltons (possibly the text's principal compiler Immanuel Halton) suffered from stomach complaints and used the commonplace book to store recipes. Similarly, an entry for 'head Ach' indicates that, on the advice of a Dr Percival, laudanum was used as a painkiller - a supplementary note being that '3 dishes of very strong coffee' be taken in order to stop the laudanum acting as an 'Opiate'.

Such sorts of information can also be found in the commonplace book of Thomas Watkins, a school teacher living at Stow, Gloucestershire, sometime around 1710. The book (which admittedly is more like a notebook than a commonplace book) contains teaching exercises, 'historical remarks about the founding of a grammar school', epigrams and verses. Also present are an inventory of books (mainly grammars but also Erasmus, Ovid, Virgil, and a copy of Tipper's Monthly Entertainments) and a number of preformatted wills, mortgage contracts, and terms of contract - an indication, perhaps, of 'self-help' on Watkins' part. There are recipes for salting bacon and 'an effectual plaister for softening and loosening corns'. Notes have been taken from 'The Compleat Family*» ^, The Whole Duty of a Woman (1707), and 'Mrs Mary Power of Uttoxeter'. Together these recipes show little change in content from those that would have been offered a hundred or even two hundred years previously. Sufferers from 'a Weakness of ye Sight' are advised to take a mixture of 'eyesbright', fennel seeds and sugar drunk in a

60 Wellcome MS 2720, folios 40, 102, and 117
61 Possibly an abbreviation of The Accomplish'd Housewife...or, the Compleat Family Cook, (1736). No text with the title The Compleat Family was printed until 1766.
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glass of wine or beer, while henbane is recommended to those with toothache.62 Though self-help was, at least in part, delivered through printed texts, it is notable that many of these were written by laymen. This situation would change over the course of the eighteenth century as such medical men as Edinburgh-educated William Buchan and the Swiss physician S.A.A.D. Tissot, sought to convince people that they could indeed treat themselves if they took leave of the quack, the village nurse, and their own ancient 'superstitious notions', and followed instead, Nature's laws and the physicians' simple but practicable advice.63

Finally, such commonplace books as those examined here tell us much these about the religious views of those that kept them. Included amongst Watkins' entries are 'A few Resolutions concerning the future regulation of my life...To keep a devout Heart and Frame...'. There are prayers, 'points of religion' and (for the use of his pupils) a catechism. Also noted are Tillotson's sermons to Charles II.64 The impact of the 'reasonable' or natural theological approach to Christianity described in the previous chapter of this thesis can be seen in the commonplace book of Henry Holden (1663-1710) a medical doctor and a senior fellow at Magdalen College, Oxford.65 There is an entry for 'Mr Rays Opinion of ye Creation' and a note stating that, according to 'Dr [Henry] Hammond' all ye prophesies relating to ye Day of Doome [referred] only to ye Destruction of Jerusalem, & Jewish Polity, without any further respect to ye end of the world'.66 Likewise, Erasmus Head, a resident of Oxford in the 1730s, remarked in his commonplace book that 'God Invisible is seen in his Creatures but never with Corporal [sic] Eyes. The Wisest of the Heathens have acknowledged the World to have been created by God, their authority not to be despised'. For Head, God was 'foreseeing, caring for & ordering all things, not only beholding past, present & future things but [also] the cause of their so being'.67

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62 Wellcome MS 4977, ff.30v-39r; ibid., ff.75v-76v
63 William Buchan, Domestic Medicine, or a Treatise on the Prevention and Cure of Diseases by Regimen and Simple Medicines, (1769), p.xiii. Tissot's Avis au peuple sur la santé, (1761), was translated into English 1765. Like Buchan's Domestic Medicine, it ran to multiple editions and was translated into numerous languages. Domestic Medicine was last published in Boston in 1913.
64 Wellcome MS 4977, f.71v
65 Foster, Alumni Ox., Vol.1, p.728
66 Wellcome MS 2863, ff.40-41
67 Wellcome MS 2800, ff.1-3
While it was through changes in religious thinking that medicine was stripped of its magical or supernatural connotations, it was only with the wider ‘medicalisation’ of society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and the introduction of prescription pharmaceuticals as a state-provided replacement for herbal remedies, that the gap between the layman and the medical professional would really be felt. By this time, of course, the past had been ‘rediscovered’, both by those who rued its passing, and by those wished to show how far ‘civilisation’ had moved on. As both amateur folklorists and government officials working in the 1880s and 1890s sought to portray what was essentially a picture of rural poverty in a positive light, so too they emphasised the distance between their own lives and those they were studying. Advised to consult local lawyers, doctors, and gentleman farmers (intermediaries that had also been favoured by seventeenth-century antiquarians), they looked for ‘survivals’ and, intentionally or otherwise, invented traditions. This ‘popular culture’ was then in itself popularised, vulgarised, and otherwise recycled in ways that echoed earlier processes of cultural diffusion. Printed first in 1863 and then in subsequent editions throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Robert Chambers’ Book of Days (the title itself mimics the idea of a commonplace book) sought to ‘temper’ the ‘progressive spirit of the age’ with ‘affectionate feelings towards what is poetical and elevated, honest and of good report, in the old national life’. For Chambers, himself a radical evolutionist who was heavily involved in the popularisation of science, this aspect of the past could only serve as a source of ‘fireside wisdom’, ‘fanciful legends’ and ‘wild and amusing stories’.

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68 See for example G.L. Gomme (ed.), The Handbook of Folklore, (London: Published for the Folklore Society by D. Nutt, 1890), p.179. Gomme also recommended consulting sextons, village inn-keepers, and old women who lived in solitary farmhouses.

Conclusion

This thesis has been concerned with the ways in which various groups in early modern society viewed one another, both generally (on the basis, for example, of trustworthiness, credulity, and morality), and, more specifically, with regards to medical knowledge. As we have seen in Chapter 1 (which dealt with the period ca.1600 to ca.1640), these perceptions were often linked to physicians' attempts to define their area of expertise and professional space. The immorality and ignorance of the quack and the mountebank were contrasted with the learning and the scarcely appreciated goodness of the physician. Not surprisingly this cant (which, in an attempt to appeal to a learned audience, borrowed heavily from humanist modes of writing) was usually ignored by lay readers. Contemporary with such texts were the writings of Thomas Browne and Laurent Joubert. Though these authors have been thought to provide us with information about the medical practices of 'the vulgar', their works were, in fact, part of a literary genre that was concerned with the frailties of human learning and with the dangers of pride. Warnings about the vulgarisation of knowledge were levelled primarily at learned rather than unlearned members of society.

The extent to which knowledge was 'vulgarised' has been demonstrated in Chapter 2. Using the medium of the commonplace book (itself the product of successive modes of ancient, medieval, and humanist learning practices) we were able to look at the manner in which medical knowledge was acquired and diffused in the period up to and surrounding the Restoration. The borrowing of manuscripts (and with them the cumulative experience of previous generations), printed books, personal invention, and word of mouth contact were all means by which knowledge spread.

From this essentially private context Chapters 3 and 4 moved on to look at the collection of medical material, first by the Hartlib Circle, and then by the Royal Society. Few members of either body believed that they were collecting something special or in any way unique. Rather they were bringing together, either from texts or from actual practice, knowledge that had become diffused but which might be used to serve public-oriented tasks. Where, as in the cases of Robert Plot and John Aubrey, this pattern altered, it was for very specific reasons. While Aubrey looked on for survivals of older medical and religious beliefs in order illustrate his views about primitive religion and
superstition, Plot saw the credulity of rustics as an ideal target for the claims of the new science. With Aubrey, and even more so with the Deists and philosophes described in Chapter 5, the desire to criticise the clergy meant that superstitions of all sorts, whether found in ancient mythology, in the rites of foreign tribes, or among the beliefs of English rustics, were raked up and thrown together.

In this sense at least, 'the people' were not so much 'discovered' in the eighteenth century, as utilised as part of a broader investigation into the development of religion, science, and civilisation; the essence, in fact, of what would emerge in the nineteenth-century as ethnology and anthropology. As was suggested in the introduction and demonstrated at the end of Chapter 6, the commonplace book and its corollaries, the encyclopaedia, and the table-book or 'Book of Days', were allied to this process. They were used both to collect information about superstitions (witness, for example, the commonplace book of the Robert Southey (1774-1843) with its entries for magic rings, spectres and the King's Evil) or, as was the case with Robert Chambers and W. Carew Hazlitt, to popularise it.1 Given the anecdotal approach of many nineteenth century folklorists and amateur historians it is easy to see how material was recycled with little attention to the historical context in which it was produced.2

Taken as a whole, several conclusions may drawn from this thesis. The first relates to Peter Burke's *Popular Culture in Early Modern Europe*, and in particular to the notion of cultural bifurcation that is central to that work. Chapter 6 bears out Burke's own view that the early modern period witnessed the 'withdrawal of the upper classes' from that which we might wish to term 'popular culture', at least insofar as it related to a rather amorphous set of beliefs. Especially in areas of witchcraft and magic or supernatural medicine, eighteenth century élites (who, in many cases, were far from credulous at the beginning of the early modern period) now refused to see the beliefs of the vulgar as anything other than superstitious or, at the very least, curious. This said, some qualifications do need to be made to Burke's thesis, not least because there appears to be

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2 See for example G.L. Gomme (ed.). *The Gentleman's Magazine Library: Being a Classified Collection of the Chief Contents of the Gentleman's Magazine from 1731 to 1868*, (London: E. Stock, 1884), p.vi. 'The old writers' noted Gomme 'were hopelessly unscientific, and it is necessary to caution readers against the too ready acceptance of comparisons, derivations and theoretical accounts of the origin of customs or objects of antiquity.'
Conclusion

a mismatch between the kind of godliness that he sees as contributing to the 'the Reform of Popular Culture' and the cultural situation that emerged in England at the beginning of the eighteenth century. As we saw in Chapters 5 and 6, neither Locke, who advocated a moderate, reasonable form of Christianity, nor Shaftesbury, whose culture of taste and aesthetics excluded all but the most refined forms of enthusiasm, would have had much truck with such 'godly' men as Joseph Glanvill and Richard Baxter: men who, though hardly positive when it came to the vulgar (Baxter, in particular, feared 'the rabble that cannot read'), would have been anathema to them. Seriousness and gravitas, as embodied in the natural philosophy of Boyle and Glanvill, were far less of a threat to 'popular culture' than the raillery of the wits and the Deists.

Linked to this first conclusion, my second relates to the parallels that have been made between a shared popular culture and common belief in the possibilities of magical or supernatural healing. As has been indicated in Chapters 1 and 3, there is little to suggest that élites really sympathised with this aspect of popular culture. Though admittedly their attachment to neo-Platonism mirrored what the vulgar regarded as correspondences between nature and the heavens, in practice their own interests in magic were constructed so as to emphasis their distance from those of the vulgar. While historians such as Charles Webster have quite rightly drawn connections between Paracelsianism, occultism, and political radicalism (certainly historians writing around the time of the Restoration tended to view religious sectaries and occultists as one and the same), it should be noted that many of these so-called 'radicals' could display remarkable conservatism towards those members of 'the vulgar' who wanted to practice medicine. As was noted in Chapter 3, their attacks against 'old Wives, Quacks and the like' relied heavily on much older arguments about esoteric learning and moral purity.

Seen from another perspective, the belief in the existence of 'high' magic, though devastating in the case of some witchcraft trials, might equally be used to reduce a claim of supernatural intervention to one of preternatural or occult (though natural) causation. As we saw in Chapter 5, this practice, which was common to those who were convinced of the possibility of demonic intervention and to those who doubtful about it,

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3 Quoted in Simon Schaffer, 'Godly Men and Mechanical Philosophers, Souls and Spirits in Restoration Natural Philosophy', *Science in Context*, (1987), Vol. 1, No. 1, p.76
became a cornerstone of the Enlightenment critique of magic and miracles. Such authors as Trenchard, Toland, Woolston, and Middleton, looked not to Newtonianism but to the works of Bruno, della Porta, Lucretius, and Epicurus, in order to attack revealed Christianity, priestcraft, and the superstitious beliefs of the vulgar. The notes contained within Evelyn’s commonplace books and in his History of Religion suggest that he and his associates did regard these ideas as a serious threat to the political and religious order. They bear out Margaret Jacob’s thesis (as presented in The Radical Enlightenment) that religious and intellectual change in England owed as much to the reformulation of older materialist ideas as it did to the ‘new science’.

If anything, it was the humanist rediscovery of literature dealing with the value of aristocracy and the dangers of mob democracy, that made the uneducated layman such a target for abuse, both at the beginning of the early modern period, and at the end. First present in the writings of Horace, the idea that the populace was a ‘beast with many heads’ can be found in the works of such diverse authors as Browne, Milton and Pope.

As Pope wrote in his The First Epistle of the Second Book of Horace Imitated (1737),

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\begin{align*}
\text{There still remains, to mortify a wit,} \\
\text{The many-headed monster of the pit:} \\
\text{A senseless, worthless, and unhonour'd crowd;} \\
\text{Who, to disturb their betters mighty proud,} \\
\text{Clatt'ring their sticks before ten lines are spoke,} \\
\text{Call for the farce, the bear, or the black-joke.} \\
\text{What dear delight to Britons farce affords!} \\
\text{Farce once the taste of mobs, but now of lords;} \\
\text{(For taste, eternal wanderer, now flies} \\
\text{From heads to ears, and now from ears to eyes.)}
\end{align*}
\]

As we saw in Chapter 6, this kind of disdain for ‘the public’ (upon whom writers like Pope often depended) was also sustained by a long-standing interest in the communicability of superstition and ignorance amongst the crowd. Notwithstanding differences in historical context, it is perhaps possible to see connections between this

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6 Horace, Epistles, I, i, 76. ‘Belua multorum es capitum’. For Milton’s criticism of the ‘miscellaneous rabble’ see Paradise Regained, III, 49-50. Also common was ‘odi profanum vulgus et arceo’ ‘I loathe the uneducated mass and keep them away from me’. (Horace Odes, III, i, 1)

Conclusion

early modern concern with the physiological causes of panic and 'enthusiasm' and the later, nineteenth century interest in the psychopathology of mobs and crowds. Certainly, the Frenchman Hippolyte Taine (1828-93) echoed both Locke and Shaftesbury when, in his account of mass panic during the French Revolution, he noted that 'No argument, no experience has any effect against the multiplying phantoms of an over-excited imagination.'

As a third conclusion, we should note that there was an underlying base to all discussions about the vulgar (whether medical or otherwise) that can be situated within humanism and, in particular, early modern political thought. Regardless of the way in which an individual commentator was viewed by his or her peers, their opinion of the vulgar did not, on the whole, tend to be positive.

This said, there were, as we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4, situations in which the vulgar might be seen as something other than the object of scorn and derision. For Samuel Hartlib and his associates, the vulgar were a source of raw information which could, if treated with sufficient care, be harnessed to their plans for medical and social reform. For Robert Boyle and John Beale they were, in most cases, more objects of Christian charity than political threats. Though the poor and the ill-educated could, as beneficiaries of God's providence, possess agricultural or medical secrets, the onus was on the learned and wealthy to supply them with medicines. Finally, in the case of Aubrey, the lives and habits of rural dwellers served both to remind him of the period before the 'Civil Warres', and to provide him with clues about Britain's ancient past.

If we are to avoid the dangers of simple reductionism, then we must give precedence to such biographies as these. Categories such as 'puritan' or 'gentleman' (which have been favoured by Charles Webster and Steven Shapin respectively) need either to be discarded or (certainly in the case of 'gentleman'), loosened so as to include idiosyncrasies of character and circumstances. Michael Hunter has already addressed this issue in relation

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to Aubrey and Boyle. I hope that my work has made a similar contribution with regards to Beale. Clearly the opinions of this somewhat garrulous man should not be discounted for what they can tell us about the manner in which men of his generation (that is those whose lives spanned the difficult period of the Civil Wars, the Interregnum, and Restoration) adapted to the times in which they were living. In combining approaches that could (as his contemporaries pointed out) be allied to any one of a number of different positions, Beale's religious and political outlook defies the kind of pigeonholing that has been carried out by Charles Webster, Mayling Stubbs and James Jacob. A religious radical by virtue of his millenarianism, Beale might just as easily be seen as a Laudian on account of his views on miracles and religious liturgy. If anything he is illustrative of some of the problems that John Spurr has discussed in relation to the Restoration Church - that is the search for a via media between hard-line Calvinism (which brought with it the risk of either alienating the congregation or turning them into 'enthusiasts') and the gaudy excesses of Catholicism and 'priestcraft'. As was argued in Chapter 5, much of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth-century literature that ostensibly deals with popular superstitions was in fact written within this wider political and religious framework.

Somewhat easier to pin down are Beale's views on medical information and the way in which it should be assembled. These bear a strong resemblance to the strand of 'low' or 'vulgar' Baconianism (the terms are Hugh Trevor-Roper's) that runs through English natural philosophy in the seventeenth century. Like many members of the Hartlib Circle Beale favoured the collection of empirical data over the kind of deductive speculations that were thought to typify Cartesian natural philosophy. Secrets belonging to farmers, artisans, and empirics were to be acquired and utilised whenever possible. As was discussed in Chapter 4, this method (though problematic in terms of the social

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10 See in particular Webster, pp.11-12; Stubbs 2, p.362; James Jacob, 'Restoration Ideologies and the Royal Society', *History of Science*, xviii, (1980), pp.25-38
status of those whose secrets were sought) appealed to Boyle, Aubrey, and Oldenburg—men who, like Beale, were also interested in the promulgation of useful information.

The idea that the *virtuoso* could learn from the 'trials' of empirics and artisans was particularly attractive to Boyle. It fitted well the moral and natural philosophical concerns upon which he based *Some Considerations Touching the Usefulness of Experimental Natural Philosophy*. Seen in terms of the wider history of scientific methodology, it bears out Ian Hacking's belief, as stated in *The Emergence of Probability* (1975), that English experimentalism emerged from just this sort of interaction between learned natural philosophy and the 'low sciences' of pharmacy and empirical medicine. This said, it is worth bearing in mind the authority that seventeenth-century *virtuosi* continued to invest in textual sources. In common with laboratory trials, these were often described as 'experiments' and used with the same conviction as if the writer had performed them himself.

While William Eamon in his *Science and the Secrets of Nature* (1994) drew attention to the role that printed 'books of secrets' played in bridging the gap between medieval texts and the experimental method of the seventeenth century, it is important to emphasise the role manuscripts continued to play both here and in the domestic sphere. Much neglected as a consequence of the overall historiographical concentration on the impact of print and print culture, manuscripts, and in particular manuscript commonplace books, were central to the constitution and popularisation of medical knowledge in early modern society. Largely ignored by Lucinda Beier in her discussion of the Bedfordshire physician John Symcots, Symcots' commonplace book highlights the contribution that his unlearned patients made to his medical practice by providing him with recipes and empirical feedback which were recorded as part of his *consilia* or case-notes. Though *consilia* were a feature of the renaissance that was taking place in learned medicine, a similar approach seems also to have characterised the approach of some laymen. As we saw with Henry Fowler, those who were sufficiently literate and interested might well test medical authorities against their practical experience, recording their findings, as he did, in a commonplace book.

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Conclusion

Documents such as these blur the boundary between the oral and the written transmission of ideas, and between learned and unlearned culture, in ways which, when appreciated, can only benefit the historian. For while evidence that an individual possessed medical knowledge exists only on the written page, we can see that in practice knowledge was exchanged both by word of mouth and by writing amongst people from a wide range of social and educational backgrounds. Though favoured by Renaissance physicians as a way of distinguishing between the learned and the vulgar, illiteracy in itself was no barrier against people knowing about and using therapies that also happened to be contained within learned texts. In Fowler’s case, his parishioners seem to have used the same basic remedies as he did. These were derived largely from herbs and animals and administered in quantities decided by the healer. Though magic was clearly a component to healing of this sort it was (as Keith Thomas noted in his study) rarely identified as such, and stands out only as a result of our modern interest in the curious and the strange.\(^\text{15}\)

As Thomas Browne observed in *Pseudodoxia Epidemica*, the tendency for knowledge to become vulgarised and error-ridden had existed ever since the Fall of Man. While in the course of the early modern period the character of this observation shifted from that of a sceptical comment on the powers of human learning to that of a somewhat more secular attack on mass superstition, the vulgarisation of medical knowledge remained. While some eighteenth-century presses turned out regularised medical books, others produced pirated editions which recycled recipes from older texts. Snippets of information were gleaned from poorly copied manuscripts or noted down after a meeting with a friend or a consultation with a physician. Medical men may have complained, but such processes as these continued.

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| MS 571 | Commonplace book of John Moulton |
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