

# Introduction

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This special issue of the *Journal of Early Modern Studies* (JEMS) started out as a regional conference. In spring 2020, Benjamin Goldberg was on a Fulbright grant at the American University in Bulgaria (AUBG), and part of his project was to organize a conference gathering scholars based in Southeastern Europe (especially in Bulgaria and Romania) who were working on topics in early modern (especially English) philosophy, religion, and science. The conference was organized by Benjamin Goldberg and Diego Lucci, an academic working at the American University in Bulgaria, and was intended to contribute to the already lively community of scholars in the region working on early modern topics. The hope was that the conference might serve as a jumping off point for further collaboration and publications, as well as demonstrate the strength of scholarship on these topics by academics based in Southeastern Europe. This conference, featuring eight paper presentations by as many scholars working in this region, was scheduled to take place on March 28, 2020 in the Panitza Library at the American University in Bulgaria. Several scholars and students from AUBG and other institutions registered to attend this event, but, just a few weeks before the day scheduled for the conference, the COVID-19 pandemic made any such live gathering impossible.

As a result, and thanks to Sorana Corneanu's enthusiastic and supportive involvement in this initiative, the project was shifted to a special issue of the *Journal of Early Modern Studies* focusing on early modern English thought with the same group of scholars working in Bulgaria and Romania. However, the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic were both unexpected and insidious, and it was quickly discovered that the pandemic made it impossible for some of our colleagues to contribute to the volume due to the increased burdens of maintaining hygiene and surviving lockdown. We note in particular that one of the many unfortunate results of the pandemic was the increased burden that fell upon female scholars, upon whom an unfair amount of home and family care was often placed, making contributing to academic projects much more difficult. As a result, two of our original participants were unable to continue work for this special issue, and, despite our attempts at widening the scope of contributors beyond the Southeast European region, we were unable to secure the participation of female academics. This does not excuse the lack of female contributors to this special issue, and the editors wish to offer an apology for thus reinforcing the already imbalanced gender ratios of publications in our field. We do hope, however, that the high quality of the articles in this issue demonstrates why we desired to proceed with their publication, as does the fact that most of the contributors work in a region sometimes ignored by scholars from Western Europe and the United States.

During the past half a century or so, the historiography on early modern England has increasingly stressed that seventeenth-century English intellectuals, including such prominent figures as Francis Bacon, Robert Boyle, Isaac Newton, and John Locke, were "men of their times" in that, far from pursuing a separation of the domains of knowledge, they were polymaths with multiple scholarly interests who, in most cases, combined scientific inquiry, philosophical analysis, and religious thinking in their works. As is demonstrated by Boyle's famous book *The Christian Virtuoso* (1690), in seventeenth-century England, the natural philosopher often came to be identified with the Christian virtuoso, given that experimental philosophy was widely regarded as buttressing the Christian faith. Likewise, natural philosophers worked with the conviction that God will reward their intellectual effort, which they also saw as inherently valuable because the exercise of one's rational capabilities could enable one to become as free as any intellectual being could be. Furthermore, natural as well as biblical theology played a foundational role in the political and moral ideas of seventeenth-century English thinkers whose writings had a momentous impact on the development of western political thought. In this regard, the cases of mid-seventeenth-century English advocates of freedom of speech and religious toleration—such as John Milton, William Walwyn, John Goodwin, and still others—and of such an influential political theorist as John Locke

are emblematic. Theology also impacted the philosophical explorations of metaphysical issues, which generated heated debates across the Republic of Letters, no less urgent at the time than the political or religious quarrels. The contribution of the Cambridge Platonists to the wider, pan-European (so to speak) Cartesian conversation in the later seventeenth century is a case in point. Finally, the British philosophical tradition of empiricism and, more generally, the style and tenor of British intellectual debate developed mainly from questions and manners of discussion put forward by experimental science. Such were the very notions of experience and sense-perception, the need to find effective research methods and to construct reliable systems of knowledge, or the networks of correspondence and collaboration, with their specific genres and conventions, which British experimentalists, starting at least with Francis Bacon and up to the members of the early Royal Society, bequeathed to the philosophical culture of modern Britain.

These are some important, and widely studied, manifestations of the multifaceted relationship between scientific, philosophical, and religious thought in seventeenth-century England. There are, however, many other aspects of this intriguing relationship that are still under-researched and that, therefore, deserve to be reassessed. For this reason, when planning the aforesaid conference and, later, this special issue, the editors invited all contributors to cover traditionally neglected instances of the interaction between philosophy, religion, and science in seventeenth-century England. As a result, the current issue features six articles that explore and reconsider different, and generally disregarded, aspects of early modern philosophy, science, and religion in the English context. The articles present both new takes on traditional figures, such as Francis Bacon and John Locke, and novel issues less often discussed in the context of early modern philosophy, including medical recipes and the influence of English republican thought on American politics. While each article in this issue is independent and looks at a specific topic, there are three main groups of papers: the first three essays deal with natural philosophy, the following two concern religious and theological issues impacting on philosophical and political ideas, and a final paper considers moral and political thought. This introduction provides an overview of these papers and highlights some correspondences and links between the essays.

The first three papers deal with various different aspects of natural philosophy as practiced in seventeenth-century England. In the early modern period, England was the center of much important natural philosophy, from the utopian theorizing of Francis Bacon, the anatomical discoveries of William Harvey, and the chemical investigations of Robert Boyle, to the epochal mathematical philosophy of Isaac Newton. The papers in this special issue all present novel answers or subjects and in so doing expand our sense of early modern

English thought. In particular, the first three articles present a number of important considerations on both the content and the form of early modern scientific work.

The first paper in this issue is “Francis Bacon on the Certainty and Deceptiveness of Sense-Perception” by Daniel Schwartz (Independent Scholar, formerly at the American University in Bulgaria). This paper begins by focusing on a potential contradiction found in Bacon’s conception of sensory experience—namely, on the tension between Bacon’s description of sense-perception as error-prone, on the one hand, and his view, on the other hand, that sense-perception is a certain and unquestionable source of information about the world. Schwartz argues, however, that this tension is, in fact, merely an illusion, and in so doing he dissolves the dilemma. In particular, drawing on the etiology of some of Bacon’s ideas that were drawn from the atomist and natural magic traditions, Schwartz offers an account of how Bacon’s conception of sense-perception is a realistic interpretation that acknowledges both the strengths and weaknesses of our capability of sensorial experience. In so doing, Schwartz demonstrates the importance of historical context in understanding philosophical positions, since the tension that the paper reconsiders results from extracting away from the specific context in which Bacon’s ideas emerged, grew, and were elaborated.

The second paper, “Concepts of Experience in Royalist Recipe Collections” by Benjamin Goldberg (University of South Florida, Fulbright Scholar at the American University in Bulgaria in spring 2020), also illustrates the importance of paying close attention to context and, in particular, the utility of careful examinations of how various historical actors use various terms. Thus we find that Goldberg’s essay shifts from the method, found in Schwartz’s paper, of examining Bacon’s explicit philosophizing about the nature of empirical sensation, to an exploration of the nature and use of terminology referring to experience. Further, Goldberg’s paper considers a novel format and context that has not often been understood as part of the history of empiricism and natural philosophy: medical recipes gathered in mid-seventeenth-century English recipe collections. Goldberg focuses on a set of interconnected and linked collections of recipes gathered by a group of Royalists in the court-in-exile of Queen Henrietta Maria in Paris, including including the Queen herself, as well as William and Margaret Cavendish and the Talbot sisters—Elizabeth Grey and Alethea Howard. Using both quantitative and qualitative analyses, Goldberg argues against the reigning interpretation of these recipes as representing a new, anti-Aristotelian idea of experience as a specific, particular event. Instead, he describes how, while there are actually a number of related conceptions of experience found in these Royalist recipe collections, the basic concept of experience is one that indicates long experience or expertise—an idea that

can be traced back at least to the humanist medicine of the Renaissance, and likely back to Galen's works in Antiquity. These first two papers, then, exemplify the need for a careful examination of the origins of concepts and ideas in order to evaluate and understand them, as well as the need to look closely at how and where various terms are deployed in order to determine their use, novelty, and meaning.

These two papers also serve to show the range of literary formats important for understanding the nature of natural philosophizing in early modern England. And it is on this subject that the third paper focuses, as it examines another novel issue in the historiography of early modern natural philosophy, focusing our attention on the extremely important epistolary and institutional context of early modern science. In "The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg and Book Reviews in the *Philosophical Transactions*, 1665–1677," Jordan Avramov (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences) explores the various ways in which (more or less) private epistolary correspondence about recently published books was articulated in the public context of the book reviews in the early editions of the *Philosophical Transactions*. Avramov examines how Oldenburg's exchanges impacted the timing, length, content, form, and sometimes even the very existence of these early book reviews. Avramov's paper thus provides a fitting example of the methods and approaches of the first two papers, illustrating the importance of looking at the origins of (in this case) reviews, as well as the need to pay careful attention to the context and character of the final forms of these reviews.

The next two papers form a second grouping—one that centers on the complex interplay between religion and philosophy in early modern England. The seventeenth century was no less filled with religious disputation, persecution, and war than the sixteenth—something especially relevant in the English context after the horrors of the British Civil Wars. The papers offered here deal not just with complex and technical debates at the intersection of philosophy and theology, but also with the larger social and religious context of confessional disputation in early modern England—a context essential for understanding the contours of these varied issues and discussions. While the topics in this section are different than those covered in the first three papers, we find that the overall approach is the same, namely, one that pays careful attention to the context, origin, and use of terms and ideas.

The fourth paper is "The Eternal Truths in Henry More and Ralph Cudworth" by Bogdan-Antoniou Deznan (University of Bucharest). Here, Deznan examines one of the most technical and complex of theological issues—one that arose in the wake of Descartes's epistolary correspondence: the issue of the created status of eternal verities. This hypothesis was initially discussed by Descartes in his 1630 correspondence with Mersenne, and it soon escaped

the confines of epistolary correspondence to animate fierce debates across confessional lines. This issue concerned not just whether or not these truths were necessary or contingent, but, as a result of this question, the very nature of God and His relationship with creation. Deznan focuses on the case of two of the Cambridge Platonists, Henry More and Ralph Cudworth, describing their commitment to aspects of Cartesian thought, as well as their questioning and criticism of some Cartesian assumptions. In particular, this paper conveys the complex hermeneutics these two thinkers engaged in during their quest to establish that the eternal truths were not merely arbitrarily instantiated by God's fiat, but were rather part of God's immutable, divine essence. This argument thus depends on clarifying the causal relationships existing between eternal truths, God, and the realm of creation, which Deznan articulates in detail. By setting aside (but not denying) certain (widely discussed) Neoplatonic aspects of this debate, and, instead, by tracing the origin and development of various conceptions of God's nature and the nature of eternal truths as they evolved in the larger Scholastic context, Deznan is able to show a new side to this debate. In so doing, he provides not just a novel interpretation of these two English thinkers, but also a set of concepts and terms grounded in the historical context that can be further used in understanding the larger theological and philosophical issues.

The fifth paper, "Locke and the Socinians on the Natural and Revealed Law" by Diego Lucci (American University in Bulgaria) examines another aspect of God's relation to creation, namely, the statuses of natural and revealed law in the work of John Locke. Again, a similar approach is found in this essay—an approach that reexamines Locke's writings against the background of the larger philosophical and religious context, in order to comprehend not just Locke's own position, but also the contours of the wider landscape of religious disputation at the end of the seventeenth century. Focusing on Locke's philosophical, political, and theological writings, Lucci describes in detail how to understand the relation between Locke and the anti-Trinitarian theologian Faustus Socinus and his disciples, the Polish Brethren. Socinian authors argued that Christ's Gospel had replaced and invalidated, at least partly, both the law of nature and the Mosaic law, and it is here that Lucci observes that, while Locke does present a number of similarities with the Socinians (such as a moralist soteriology, a non-Trinitarian Christology, mortalism, etc.), there are significant differences between them, especially on the issue of the statuses of the natural and revealed law. In particular, Lucci describes how Locke attempted to establish that the revealed law had, in fact, reaffirmed the divinely given, inherently rational, universally binding, and eternally valid law of nature in its entirety. In this regard, Lucci pays special attention to Locke's emphasis on the duty to preserve both the self's and others' (God-given) natural rights—a duty

that is an essential part of the divine law of nature and that, therefore, cannot be ignored under any circumstances. Thus, according to Locke, under the Christian covenant the protection of both the self's and others' natural rights from abusive individuals or oppressive governments is still a right and a duty to the divine Creator and Legislator. This is why Locke, diverging significantly from the Socinian tradition, decidedly affirmed the right to self-defense, resistance, and revolution. Lucci's paper demonstrates the utility of examining the origins (including the theological origins) and the larger context in which philosophical and political positions are created and defended.

The sixth and final paper in this issue shifts our attention away from the context of English thought in the seventeenth century, to the influence of English political and moral philosophy on the new American polity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. We thus end the issue with a fascinating look at how English philosophy crossed borders and oceans and was taken up in a new context. In "Algernon Sidney and the Republican Tradition in Jeffersonian America," Pierangelo Castagneto (American University in Bulgaria) argues for the importance of the English republican philosopher and radical Algernon Sidney for understanding the contours of American politics and rhetoric in the Jeffersonian era. In so doing, Castagneto provides a fitting end to this special issue, as his work involves the same sorts of careful examinations of terminology, etiology, and context found in earlier works, as well as the deployment of these concepts in a novel context and interesting format. In particular, Castagneto reconsiders the ways in which the response of the U.S. Congress to attacks on American shipping with the Embargo Act of 1807 was supported with an explicit appeal to Sidney's republican ideals. Specifically, Castagneto describes how Gideon Granger (1767–1822), a lawyer from Connecticut, wrote *An Address to the People of New England* (1808) under the pseudonym of Algernon Sidney. Under this name and by these means, Granger was able to reintroduce into public discourse some of Sidney's key republican ideas, such as the natural right to oppose abusive power and the vital necessity to preserve republican virtues in order to combat moral and political corruption. Castagneto thus explores how philosophical and moral ideas can change context and location, and yet remain linked with their origins.

Briefly, this special issue serves several purposes. As we have explained in this introduction, some of the articles in this issue reevaluate some traditional figures and topics, while other articles examine subjects that are discussed less often in the historiography on early modern England. However, all the six papers in this issue provide a fresh reassessment of some largely neglected aspects of the interactions between philosophy, religion, and science in seventeenth-century England. In so doing, the papers in this issue demonstrate the importance of looking widely when exploring the histories of philosophy,

religion, and science, including examinations of standard philosophical treatises, but also expanding our investigations to include political pamphlets, newspaper articles, epistolary correspondence, and recipes. Moreover, it is hoped that this special issue will promote the further development of this field of study in Southeastern Europe while drawing, at the same time, larger attention from international scholars to the research in this field that is being done in this region.

As a final note, the editors of this issue thank the Editors, the Editorial Board, and the Advisory Board of the *Journal of Early Modern Studies* for accepting to publish this collection of essays as a special issue of this prestigious journal. Special thanks go to Vlad Alexandrescu and Dana Jalobeanu, Editors of the *Journal of Early Modern Studies*, for endorsing this initiative. The editors of this issue also express their gratitude to the scholars who have served as peer reviewers of the aforesaid six papers: their feedback and suggestions have significantly contributed to further improve the quality of these essays, which we are now pleased to present to an international audience. Sorana Corneanu would like to acknowledge support from a grant of the Romanian Ministry of Research, Innovation and Digitization, CNCS/CCCDI – UEFISCDI, project number PCE 105/2021, within PNCDI III.