

troubled concerning free will and predestination, complaining, that the Christian church is so divided about this article, as they will never agree in one united belief concerning that point; which is the cause of the trouble of so many consciences, nay, in some even to despair. But I do verily believe, that if man do but love God from his soul, and with all his power, and pray for his saving graces, and offend not any creature when offences can or may be avoided, and follow the only instructions of the sacred church, not endeavouring to interpret the word of God after his own fancy and vain imagination, but praying zealously, believing undoubtedly, and living virtuously and piously, he can hardly fall into despair, unless he be disposed and inclined towards it through the irregularities of nature, so as he cannot avoid it. But I most humbly thank the omnipotent God, that my conscience is in peace and tranquility, beseeching him of his mercy to give to all men the like.

XIII Of the Knowledge of Man

Some philosophical writers discourse much concerning the knowledge of man, and the ignorance of all other creatures; but I have sufficiently expressed my opinion hereof, not only in this, but in my other philosophical works, to wit, that I believe other creatures have as much knowledge as man, and man as much in his kind, as any other particular creature in its kind; but their knowledges being different, by reason of their different natures and figures, it causes an ignorance of each other's knowledge; nay, the knowledge of other creatures, many times gives information to man: As for example, the Egyptians are informed how high the river Nile will rise by the crocodile's building her nest higher or lower; which shows, that those creatures foresee or foreknow more than man can do: Also, many birds foreknow the rising of a tempest, and shelter themselves before it comes; the like examples might be given of several other sorts of animals, whose knowledge proceeds either from some sensitive perceptions, or from rational observations, or from both; and if there be such a difference in the rational and sensitive knowledge of one kind of creatures, to wit, animals; much more in all other kinds, as vegetables, minerals, elements, and so in all nature's works: Wherefore he that will say, there is no knowledge but in man, at least in animal kind; doth, in my opinion, say more than ever he will be able to prove; nay, the contrary is so evident, as it is without all dispute: But man, out of

self-love, and conceited pride, because he thinks himself the chief of all creatures, and that all the world is made for his sake; doth also imagine that all other creatures are ignorant, dull, stupid, senseless and irrational; and he only wise, knowing and understanding. And upon this ground some believe, that man is bound and decreed to pray to God for all other creatures, as being not capable to pray for themselves; like as a minister is bound to pray for his flock. But really, if the pastor should only pray, and his sheep not, but they did continue in their sins, I doubt his prayers would be of little effect, and therefore it is well if their prayers and petitions be joined together. The like may be said of all other creatures; for the single knowledge and devotion of mankind, cannot benefit other creatures, if they be ignorant, and not capable to know, admire, adore and worship God themselves. And thus no man, with all the force of logic, will ever be able to prove, that he is either the chief above all other creatures, or that he only knows and worships God, and no natural creature else; for it is without dispute, that other creatures, in their kinds, are as knowing and wise, as man in his kind.

XIV A Natural Philosopher Cannot Be an Atheist

I wonder how some of our learned writers can imagine, that those who study reason and philosophy, should make them “their vouchers of licentious practices, and their secret scorn of religion, and should account it a piece of wit and gallantry to be an atheist; and of atheism, to be a philosopher”;¹⁴¹ considering that reason and philosophy is the only way that brings and leads us to the natural knowledge of God: for, it would be as much absurdity to say, reason and philosophy induce atheism, as to say, reason is not reason; for, reason is the most knowing and wisest part of nature; and the chief knowledge of nature, is to know there is a God: Wherefore those that do argue in such a manner, argue without reason; and by calling others weak heads and fools, prove themselves irrational. But I perceive their supposition is built upon a false ground; for they are of opinion, that “the exploding of immaterial substances, and the unbounded prerogative of matter, must needs infer atheism”;¹⁴² which whether it do not show a weaker head than those

¹⁴¹ Glanvill, *Scep sis Scientifica*, Preface, unpaginated; slightly altered and condensed.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*: “And what the confident exploding of all immaterial substances, the unbounded prerogatives are bestowed upon matter, and the consequent assertions, signify, you need not be informed

MARGARET CAVENDISH,
DUCHESS OF NEWCASTLE

Observations upon Experimental Philosophy

EDITED BY

EILEEN O'NEILL

University of Massachusetts, Amherst



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS (VIRTUAL PUBLISHING)
FOR AND ON BEHALF OF THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge CB2 1RP
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Cambridge University Press 2001

This edition © Cambridge University Press (Virtual Publishing) 2003

First published in printed format 2001

A catalogue record for the original printed book is available
from the British Library and from the Library of Congress

Original ISBN 0 521 77204 4 hardback

Original ISBN 0 521 77675 9 paperback

ISBN 0 511 01365 5 virtual (netLibrary Edition)