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Catharine Trotter Cockburn on the Virtue of Atheists

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Abstract

In her *Remarks Upon Some Writers* (1743), Catharine Trotter Cockburn takes a seemingly radical stance by asserting that it is possible for atheists to be virtuous. In this paper, I examine whether or not Cockburn's views concerning atheism commit her to a naturalistic ethics and a so-called radical enlightenment position on the independence of morality and religion. First, I examine her response to William Warburton's critique of Pierre Bayle's arguments concerning the possibility of a society of virtuous atheists. I argue that this response shows Cockburn vacillating between a moral naturalism, on the one hand, and a theistic morality, on the other. Second, I draw on Cockburn's letters to her niece Ann Arbuthnot, and her opinions concerning mystical ideas about "the will of God" in north-east Scotland in the mid-eighteenth century. I maintain that these letters give us a fuller appreciation of Cockburn's naturalistic position. My conclusion is that Cockburn's ideas concerning atheism prompt us to consider the close interplay between secular and religious principles in so-called radical ideas of the period.

Keywords

Catharine Trotter Cockburn; William Warburton; atheism; virtue; religion; mysticism

In his *Divine Legation of Moses* (1738–41), the Anglican theologian William Warburton (1698–1779) argues that atheism, revealed “in all its Misery and Nakedness”, must be regarded as destructive to civil society.¹ Atheists do not fear for a future state, he says, and so they will lie, cheat, and murder, whenever they can get away with it. They will be cruel, unjust, and ungrateful, and they will break their promises and betray their family and friends, whenever the chance permits. In Warburton’s opinion, atheists lie under no obligation to be virtuous because, by definition, they have no knowledge of the will of God, a superior lawgiver.² His negative view of atheists was widely shared in England at the time. Only a few decades earlier, in his *Letter concerning Toleration* (1689), John Locke had argued that atheists should not be tolerated in civil society, given that they could not be trusted to uphold their “promises, covenants, and oaths”.³ Prior to the eighteenth century, only a handful of authors dared to challenge the prevailing assumption. In his *Pensées diverses sur le comète* [Various Thoughts on the Comet] (1682), the French sceptic Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) argued against the popular belief that atheism causes the destruction of human societies. In his opinion, a society of virtuous atheists is entirely feasible because religious convictions do not determine virtuous conduct anyway, and atheists might form basic moral beliefs—and develop civil laws to enforce those beliefs—with the assistance of reason alone.⁴ Along similar lines, in his *Inquiry concerning Virtue, and Merit* (1699), the English philosopher Anthony Ashley Cooper (1671–1713), the third Earl of Shaftesbury, concluded that atheists have the capacity to cultivate virtue, because virtue consists in a love of order, harmony, and beauty in human society,⁵ it does not depend on religious belief. Both Bayle and Shaftesbury distinguished between ethics and religion, and founded morality in human nature or natural human capacities. In his *Divine Legation*, Warburton attacks both men for

forging “a Scheme of Morality independent of Religion” with the supposedly radical aim of overthrowing religious belief.⁶

This paper examines the views of the moral philosopher Catharine Trotter Cockburn (1679?–1749) concerning the virtue of atheists.⁷ At first glance, as an ardent supporter of Samuel Clarke (1675–1729), Cockburn appears to belong among those Anglican writers who closed ranks against the freethinkers of the mid-eighteenth century, to protect the Church’s interests against the rise of secularism and naturalism in ethics. While Clarke held a number of heterodox opinions concerning the Trinity and Christ’s incarnation, he nevertheless argued for the importance of religion with regards to moral practice. In his *Discourse Concerning the Unchangeable Obligations of Natural Religion* (1706), he maintains that all rational creatures have unalterable moral obligations, arising out of the eternal and necessary difference of things, as the express will, command, and law of God. Cockburn defends Clarke’s moral theory in her *Remarks Upon Some Writers in the Controversy concerning the Foundation of Moral Virtue and Moral Obligation* (1743) and *Remarks Upon the Principles and Reasonings of Dr Rutherford’s Essay on the Nature and Obligations of Virtue* (1747), as well as in her correspondence.⁸ Nevertheless, Cockburn’s philosophical outlook is somewhat more complicated than it first appears. This is because Cockburn is *also* a defender of Bayle and Shaftesbury and of their view that it is possible for atheists to be virtuous. In her *Remarks Upon Some Writers*, she claims that it is theoretically possible for atheists to be virtuous because they might have knowledge of the essential difference between right and wrong, without any knowledge of the will of God. Viewed in this light, Cockburn would appear to be part of the freethinking cohort pitted against Anglican theologians of the eighteenth century. She would appear to be one of those so-called “radicals” who inspired the modern impulse

toward moral naturalism and secularism, by developing a scheme of morality independent of religion.

Recent scholars have examined the extent to which Cockburn is committed to a naturalistic ethics. Broadly speaking, moral naturalism is the view that objective moral facts are facts about natural things that can be known by natural means.⁹ Martha Brandt Bolton, Patricia Sheridan, and Karen Green agree that Cockburn is opposed to a reductive moral naturalism according to which the principles of morality are wholly explicable in terms of non-moral facts, such as rational self-interest.¹⁰ They also agree that Cockburn is outwardly committed to a theistic morality insofar as she seeks to harmonize religion and morality. But there are differing opinions concerning the degree to which Cockburn's moral system relies on a purely naturalistic foundation, independently of divine authority. Sheridan has argued that Cockburn is a moral naturalist to the extent that she denies that moral obligation is a function of God's will and command.¹¹ In Cockburn's view, the obligatory force of morality arises entirely from the unalterable nature of things, independently of the will of God, such that even God himself is subject to the same fitness relations binding on his creatures. Human beings are capable of feeling the obligatory force of morality purely by virtue of their natures as rational, sensible, and sociable beings.¹² The natural ability of human beings to know and reflect upon moral distinctions, such as good and bad, right and wrong, fit and unfit, enables them to pursue their right ends as human beings. "*The nature of man,*" Cockburn says, "*is the ground or reason of the law of nature, i.e. of moral good and evil*".¹³ On this reading, Cockburn's moral naturalism has both a moral realist component and an epistemological element: that is, a view that moral facts are grounded in "the eternal and immutable nature of things" (reflected in both human and divine nature) and a theory about how human beings

come to know those facts by exercising their natural capacities, namely their capacities for sensation and reflection.¹⁴

By contrast, Green has denied that Cockburn is deeply naturalist because her moral theory “depends for its cogency on the belief that there is a good God, who has determined that our nature should be to be ethical, social beings, and who will ensure that virtue will be rewarded with happiness, if not in this life, in a life to come”.¹⁵ At its heart, Green suggests, Cockburn’s moral theory depends on the existence of God as a benevolent creator: “it is in accord with God’s will, and the nature that he has given us, that we should love and care for each other”.¹⁶ Green thus questions the idea that if we were to excise God’s will from Cockburn moral theory—kick away the divine crutches, as it were—her theory of moral obligation would be left standing, whole and complete. Rather, God plays a vital supernatural role in Cockburn’s theory as both creator and legislator: he provides human beings with their rational, sociable, and sensible natures, and he ensures that virtue is rewarded and vice punished. Strictly speaking, moral naturalists shun any appeal to supernatural or non-natural facts as the grounds of their moral theory. On this reading, then, Cockburn does not appear to be a strict moral naturalist; she may not be as “radical” as we first thought.

In this paper, I investigate whether or not Cockburn’s views about atheism can shed any light on the extent of her moral naturalism. In the literature on Cockburn’s moral philosophy,¹⁷ commentators have yet to examine her views on atheism in response to Warburton. Such an examination is valuable, I maintain, because Cockburn’s comments on virtuous atheists speak directly to the issue of whether or not there can be any moral obligation without knowledge of God or his supernatural commands. In the first part, I consider Cockburn’s views about the virtue of atheists in the context of her reply to Warburton’s critique of Bayle in his *Divine*

Legation. In her commentary, Cockburn appears to vacillate between defending Bayle's position, on the one hand, and upholding Warburton's appeals to the will of God and the divine sanctions, on the other. This mid-way or moderate position lends support to Green's suggestion that Cockburn's philosophy is not "deeply naturalist"¹⁸ because, like Warburton, Cockburn still gives an important role to the will of God in morality.

In the second part, however, I situate Cockburn's views about religion and morality in the context of her correspondence with her niece Ann Arbuthnot (née Hepburn), and examine Cockburn's criticisms of mystical ideas then current in north-east Scotland, influenced by women such as Antoinette Bourignon (1616–80), Jeanne Marie Bouvier de La Motte, Madame Guyon (1648–1717), and Marie Huber (1695–1723). In the literature on Cockburn, this mystical counterfoil to her thought has yet to be examined in full, largely due to the fact that almost all of Arbuthnot's letters are omitted from the 1751 edition of Cockburn's *Works*.¹⁹ Drawing on manuscripts in the British Library,²⁰ I argue that Cockburn's correspondence with Arbuthnot sheds crucial light on Cockburn's conception of "the will of God", and lends further support to a naturalistic reading of her moral theory. These letters reveal that we must look not only to Cockburn's moral realism but to her naturalistic epistemological commitments, to appreciate the full extent of her moral naturalism.

Overall, I intend to show that there is something valuable to be gained by integrating Cockburn's neglected ideas about atheism into the so-called radical enlightenment narrative. Her writings provide us with a unique defence of virtuous atheism in this period, a defence that is difficult to classify as straightforwardly radical in the usual sense.

1. Cockburn and Warburton on atheism

Is it possible for atheists to be virtuous? Would a society of atheists simply run amok, killing, lying, and cheating, or would its members be capable of remedying their vices and perfecting their virtues? Cockburn addresses these questions in a significant footnote to her *Remarks Upon Some Writers*, in which she entertains a thought experiment involving two men who belong to a society of atheists.²¹ One man has fallen into a pit, in which he will inevitably die if no-one helps him out; while the other is a traveller who happens to be passing by and could easily assist him. In Cockburn's opinion, we cannot say that these two atheists perceive nothing but the natural (that is, the bare descriptive) difference between leaving a man to die in a pit, on the one hand, and helping him out of it, on the other. Rather, they would inevitably perceive a salient moral or normative difference: the man in distress would likely regard the first action as highly detestable, while the act of assistance would be seen as good and worthy of his gratitude. The traveller, too, would undoubtedly be conscious that the first course of action would be worse than the second. Moreover, if he were to leave the man in the pit, and hurry home for the sake of some business or pleasure, it is likely that his fellow atheists would condemn him too. From Cockburn's viewpoint, in theory at least, a society of atheists is capable of perceiving the moral difference of things—the essential difference between right and wrong, virtue and vice, good and bad, fit and unfit—even though its members lack any knowledge of God. Any atheist would be capable of perceiving that the traveller's negligence was morally indecent, simply by virtue of being a reasonable, sociable, and sensible creature. An atheist can feel the obligatory force of morality, and discern the objective difference between a good and a bad action, solely as a function of his nature as a human being.

To understand these ideas, they must be situated in the wider context of Cockburn's theory of moral obligation.²² Like Clarke, she claims that the primary foundation of moral obligation

lies in the necessary relations and essential nature and fitness of things, antecedent to the will of God. While the human capacity for “moral sense”, a faculty of reasoned judgment, together with the will of God and the divine sanctions, might excite or motivate human beings to practice virtue, the ultimate ground of obligation lies in the eternal difference of things. To move us to action, after all, the moral sense must first recognize this eternal difference; and even the divine will itself must be determined by good rather than evil; and so God, too, must conform to the eternal and immutable order of morality.²³ Since human beings have been created according to this order, they can be assured that moral obligation is grounded in their nature. Cockburn says that “there are principles in his [man’s] nature that direct him to regard what is right, and fit, and to desire the good of others, and . . . these are therefore proper grounds of obligation as well as his natural desire of his own good”.²⁴ This is why an atheist is obliged to act morally even though he has no notion of God—because moral obligation has a naturalistic foundation, independently of the will of God. In Cockburn’s view, if the traveller does not help the man out of the pit, he can be justifiably condemned both by himself and by other men, according to the unalterable nature of right and wrong. Theoretically speaking, all atheists are capable of discerning their obligations as a function of their reasonable, sociable, and sensible natures.

In the section of her *Remarks Upon Some Writers* titled “*Remarks on some passages of the first book of the Divine Legation of Moses*”, Cockburn expands on these ideas by explicitly challenging William Warburton’s negative views concerning atheism. It is worth examining Warburton’s arguments in detail, to appreciate fully the nature of Cockburn’s response. In his *Divine Legation*, Warburton maintains that knowledge of the essential difference of things is insufficient for the practice of virtue: by itself it cannot guarantee that all agents will act morally. In section four of his first volume, he challenges the arguments of Pierre Bayle’s

Pensées diverses sur le comète and his *Continuation des pensées diverses sur la comète* [Continuation of Various Thoughts on the Comet] (1705). To counter Bayle's claim that a society of virtuous atheists is possible, Warburton proposes to trace moral obligation to its foundations, to "trace up moral Duty to its first Principles".²⁵ He concludes that the primary foundation of moral obligation must be knowledge of the will of God or "A *Superior Will*".²⁶ Atheism is necessarily destructive to society, according to Warburton, because without knowledge of the will of God, atheists can never be sufficiently obliged and motivated to act virtuously. With regards to Bayle's hypothetical society of atheists, he concludes: (1) that those atheists could never attain knowledge of the morality of actions properly so called; and (2) that even though atheists might have the capacity for moral sense (an "*instinctive* Approbation of *Right* and Abhorrence of *Wrong*, prior to all Reflexion"),²⁷ and a capacity for knowledge of the essential difference of things, this sense and knowledge (even in combination) are insufficient to influence the practice of virtue.²⁸

To defend conclusion (1), Warburton argues against Bayle's claim that "an Atheist may have an Idea of the moral difference between Good and Evil, because Atheists, as well as Theists, may comprehend the first Principles of Morals and Metaphysics, from which this Difference may be deduced".²⁹ When it comes to our hypothetical case of the atheist in the pit, Bayle would propose that the atheist-traveller is obliged by his own reason, an attribute of his mind, to help his fellow atheist. His reason would inform him of the difference between a good and a bad action toward the man in distress, and it would oblige him to act decently "in conformity with reason".³⁰ In Warburton's opinion, this is completely absurd. To make a man's reason the foundation of moral obligation, is to make a man the obliger *of himself*. But the same man cannot be both the obliger and the obliged; he cannot "entreat or enter into a

Compact with himself”.³¹ If this were possible, then a man might back out of an obligation at any time, because he might relinquish his right to demand that obligation of himself.

To support his own theistic morality, Warburton asserts that moral obligation implies a law, and a law implies the existence of a *lawgiver*.³² By failing to acknowledge a lawgiver, according to Warburton, the atheist cannot point to a naturalistic law or the “law of nature” as a foundation for moral obligation. This is because moral agents must have liberty of choice in order to be accountable for their actions; they must be capable of actively obeying or disobeying a law, as a result of their deliberations. But the law of nature simply makes “Men obliged as Clocks are by Weights, but never as free agents are”. Such a law does not oblige so much as necessitate. For moral action to be possible, according to Warburton, we must appeal to “the unnecessitating Command of an intelligent Superior”.³³ And so, Warburton reaffirms his first conclusion: that atheists cannot have knowledge of the morality of actions, strictly speaking. In his opinion, such knowledge requires knowledge of a God who will punish the wicked and reward the good for their moral choices and actions.

Finally, Warburton considers the view that a faculty of moral sense and a knowledge of the essential difference of things *together* might motivate the atheist to pursue virtuous conduct. He asks: could this combination be sufficient to influence the practice of virtue in an atheist society? In response, Warburton points to the fact that the moral sense can be corrupted and distorted, sometimes even obliterated, by the influence of custom, as in cases of widespread infanticide.³⁴ Yet our knowledge of the essential difference of things cannot make up for this defect or weakness in the moral sense (this is Warburton’s defence of conclusion [2]). It cannot act as an adequate “guard” to the moral sense because, in itself, this knowledge is insufficient to excite or motivate us to pursue the greatest good.³⁵ To pursue ends that go

beyond our own happiness, we require something that operates on our passions of hope and fear; to be properly motivated to pursue unselfish ends, we must be able to overcome self-interested passions with even stronger passions.³⁶ For this reason, Warburton believes that religion is unavoidably necessary for civil society; without it, the generality of human beings will never be motivated to practice virtue toward others. Human beings must have strong hopes and fears about future rewards and punishments in order to pursue the greatest possible good for society as a whole.

In her *Remarks Upon Some Writers*, Cockburn provides a detailed critique of these arguments. Like Warburton, she observes a crucial distinction between the *foundations* of moral obligation, on the one hand, and *motivating influences* on moral practice, on the other. She allows that the moral sense and knowledge of the will of God can motivate or excite human beings to pursue virtuous actions; but only knowledge of the essential difference of things can provide the foundations of moral obligation. Hence, she explicitly denies Warburton's claim "That an Atheist is not under any obligation to act agreeable to right reason,' *i.e.* to practise virtue".³⁷ Contrary to Warburton, she insists that atheists deserve praise and blame for their actions, despite the fact that they have no knowledge of the will of God. This is because their knowledge of the essential difference of things lays an obligation on them, regardless of their lack of religious beliefs. This obligation arises from their essential nature as human beings, a nature which dictates relations of fitness in their interactions with others.

Cockburn rejects Warburton's claim that an obligation necessarily implies the existence of an obliger. Instead, she highlights the common-sense meaning of the term obligation as "a perception of some ground or reason, upon which it [*i.e.*, moral action] is founded".³⁸ When

we say that the atheist is obliged to help the man out of the pit, we mean only that reason dictates he is required to offer assistance. It follows from this that a man might be the obliger of himself; the obliger and the obliged need not be different persons. A man's own perceptions and judgements might give him sufficient ground or reason upon which to act. In fact, Cockburn goes even further and says,

a free-agent must be always the *immediate* obliger of himself: Whether he judges, that the will of a superior is to be the only rule of his actions; or that he ought to act conformably to the necessary relations, and essential differences of things, or to his consciousness of right and wrong; or that a prospect of rewards and punishments should solely influence his actions; in either case it is equally the perception and judgment of his own mind, or his *reason*, that obliges him to act accordingly; and this is so far from being an absurdity, that it is essential to *moral choice* and *free agency*.³⁹

Cockburn denies that a man may relinquish an obligation by waiving his right to oblige himself, whenever he likes. The power to give up a right applies only when that right is acquired by voluntary compact, not when the right is deduced from the unalterable nature of things. But since a moral obligation is grounded in the essential difference between good and evil, right and wrong, it is not possible simply to withdraw ourselves from an obligation of this kind.

Cockburn also rejects Warburton's claim that a law necessarily implies the existence of a superior lawgiver, as the grounds of obedience to that law. She points out that the "law of a superior does not make an action morally good or evil; it only declares what is so, or restrains and incites by the sanctions of punishment and reward".⁴⁰ By Warburton's own logic, the will of a superior might motivate us to pursue virtue, but it cannot compel us to do so, because then this would be destructive of all moral agency. The only "necessity" that free agents lay

under is that of acting according to their own judgement of what is good and fit, such that they would reproach themselves if they chose otherwise. Cockburn says that “No stronger obligation can be laid upon a free-agent, than that of standing self-approved, or self-condemned”.⁴¹ It follows that atheists are capable of standing under this obligation, because they are capable of recognizing that their nature obliges them to act according to the essential difference of things. Atheists are capable of having “that sense of right and wrong so strong impressed, as to be attended with a consciousness, that the one deserves reward and the other punishment, *even though there were no God*”.⁴² If we say that there is no obligation without knowledge of the will of God, then we are committed to the absurdity that atheists are not accountable for their actions in the hereafter. In her view, it is better to assert that God gives all human beings reason *by nature*. Together with their social and sensual inclinations, reason and reflection enable them to recognize the essential moral differences of things and obliges them to pursue virtue.

Cockburn expresses similar sentiments in her next work, the *Remarks Upon the Principles and Reasonings of Dr. Rutherford*, a commentary on *An Essay on the Nature and Obligations of Virtue* (1744) by Thomas Rutherford (1712–71). William Warburton played an active part in the publication of these *Remarks*, adding a “Preface” in which he reiterates his opinion that “*obligation* without an obliger, and an *obliger* without agency, were mere jargon”.⁴³ He says of Cockburn that “This writer, though placing the foundation of moral virtue (I think, wrongly) in the *eternal relations* of things; yet allows the other principles all their efficacy; and so sagely secures the interests of practical morality”.⁴⁴ He still insists, in other words, that recourse to a superior will is required as a foundation for moral obligation. Understandably, this “Preface” was a source of some irritation to Cockburn. In a letter to Ann Arbuthnot on 2 October 1747, she says that she wished Warburton had been

less tenacious of his opinions; for you see he persists still in the same notions of the foundation of Moral Virtue and Obligation, which I had opposed in my former remarks, notwithstanding all my fine reasoning, which he so much extols. Indeed he says very high things of my last performance in his private letters to me, both as his own judgement and all others that spoke of it: *that it is a masterpeice, that confuting my adversary is the least of its praise.*⁴⁵

From 1744 to 1745, Cockburn and Warburton were engaged in a private correspondence on the foundations of moral obligation, initiated by Warburton himself.⁴⁶ While only one letter from this exchange survives (a letter by Warburton dated 26 January 1745),⁴⁷ we can guess at the nature of Cockburn's replies by certain pointed comments in her *Remarks Upon Dr Rutherford*. In his *Essay*, Rutherford argues that the obligation to practice virtue rests on self-interest alone; we are obliged to pursue virtue solely because of the private happiness this will produce once we receive our divine reward in a future state. Like Warburton, he maintains that knowledge of religion, and of divine revelation concerning future rewards and punishments, is necessary for obligation. In her *Remarks Upon Dr Rutherford*, Cockburn directs the same criticism to Rutherford that she had directed against Warburton: "Those gentlemen would do well to consider," she says, "how wantonly they set loose, not only Atheists, but all mankind, who have ever been without the knowledge of God's revealed will, and the sanctions of his laws, from owing any duty to him, or to their fellow creatures".⁴⁸ She extols the merits of her own viewpoint, that moral obligation arises from an agent's perception of the essential moral difference and fitness of things, by observing that this makes both heathens and atheists "justly punishable for the neglect of moral virtue".⁴⁹

Now, with this analysis in hand, we might return to our earlier question about the extent of Cockburn's moral naturalism. In the debate with Warburton, we can see that Cockburn

affirms that moral obligation is founded in the nature of things; it does not rely on any supernatural command or the antecedent will of God. More than this, she takes the naturalistic view that, even in a hypothetical world without God, human beings (such as they are by nature) would be capable of having a sense of right and wrong, and of recognizing that the one deserves reward and the other punishment.⁵⁰ By virtue of their inherent natures as reasonable, sociable, and sensible beings, they would be capable of obliging themselves to pursue virtue as something fit and good. Through the perceptions and judgments of their own minds, they would be obliged to act accordingly.⁵¹ This obligation would not be merely subjective or mind-dependent but would arise as an objective moral fact grounded in the nature of things. On this reading, Cockburn's "radicalism" lies in the suggestion that we could excise God from her theory—hypothetically speaking, at least, we could remove the divine creator and lawgiver—and the foundations of moral obligation would remain intact.

In the same texts, however, there is also evidence on the "conservative" or "moderate" side: that is, for the view that Cockburn sees a vital role for religion in morality. In response to Warburton, Cockburn allows that human beings require knowledge of God's will in order to be *motivated* to virtue. This caveat falls outside the bounds of a strict moral naturalism because it requires that we have knowledge of supernatural facts in order to be good and virtuous *in practice*. In her *Remarks upon Some Writers*, Cockburn agrees with Warburton that moral sense and fitness theory are insufficient in themselves "to influence society to the practice of virtue".⁵² (This is presumably what leads Warburton to praise her in his "Preface" for securing "the interests of practical morality"). Here Cockburn sides with those who question the *practical* possibility of a society of virtuous atheists. She readily acknowledges that "the knowledge of the *essential difference of things* would not alone be generally effectual to influence a society of Atheists to the practice of virtue".⁵³ In a world without

God, presumably, human beings would be capable of feeling the obligatory force of morality as a function of their nature, but they would not be uniformly moved to behave virtuously by reason and reflection alone—some further external influence would be required. So we must give some grounds to the will of God, Cockburn says, as a necessary motivating influence on the practice of virtue. She allows that Warburton has “strongly proved the necessity of religion to society”.⁵⁴ This would appear to lend support to Green’s assertion that there are limits to Cockburn’s moral naturalism: Cockburn takes recourse to a supernatural being not merely as the creator, but also as the lawgiver.⁵⁵ In her philosophy, knowledge of God’s will is required to give morality the force of law in practice, to motivate human beings to be virtuous in order to attain reward and avoid punishment. On this reading, the radical edge of Cockburn’s moral naturalism is blunted by the concession that knowledge of the supernatural order is necessary for the practical realisation of moral virtue in society as a whole. Cockburn thus appears to uphold a mid-way position between defending Bayle’s position, on the one hand, and upholding Warburton’s appeals to the will of God and the divine sanctions, on the other.

In the next section, however, I turn to Cockburn’s correspondence with Arbuthnot, and especially her views about those mystical thinkers who were so influential in mid-eighteenth-century Scotland. Here we will see that Cockburn’s responses to Arbuthnot are valuable for illuminating precisely what Cockburn means when she allows that knowledge of the will of God might motivate the practice of virtue in society.

2. Cockburn and Arbuthnot on mysticism

From 1726 to 1739, Cockburn lived in Aberdeen in the north-east of Scotland and was in regular correspondence with Arbuthnot, the daughter of her sister-in-law, who lived in

Peterhead, about 50 kilometres (31 miles) north of Aberdeen.⁵⁶ Arbuthnot's father was the Reverend Alexander Hepburn (d. 1737), an Episcopal minister and fervent Jacobite, who seems to have been closely connected with the mystical movement of north-east Scotland in the early eighteenth century.⁵⁷ In Aberdeen, one of the most prominent devotees of mysticism was another Episcopalian and Jacobite, Dr George Garden (1649–1733), the uncle of Arbuthnot's mother and Cockburn's husband, Patrick.⁵⁸ In 1699, Garden published *An Apology for M. Antonia Bourignon*, a defence of the writings and sentiments of the French-Flemish mystic Antoinette Bourignon; and in Blois in 1717, he attended the deathbed of the famous pietist Madame Guyon, Jeanne Marie Bouvier de La Motte, a leading influence on Scottish Episcopalian mystical thought. In their correspondence, Cockburn and Arbuthnot discuss "Uncle Garden" only in passing, shortly following his death in 1733. But throughout their letters, they comment on a number of other mystical authors, among them Guyon and Bourignon's French disciple Pierre Poiret, as well as Wolf von Metternich, Marie Huber, Charles Hector de Saint George, the marquis of Marsay, and Jacques Bertot. (At one point, Arbuthnot complains that among her circle of friends she can borrow nothing but mystical books.)⁵⁹ In the course of criticizing these French and German thinkers, Cockburn's views concerning "the will of God" come to the fore.

Generally speaking, the mystics of this era emphasized the importance of an inward faith and of the soul's personal communion with God. In keeping with a quietist philosophy, they recommended that agents shut off the faculties of sensation and imagination, and engage in the "prayer of internal silence", in order to receive immediate inspiration from God. To prepare for this mystical experience, George Garden observes, it is important for agents to acquire

a profound humility and deep sense of your own nothingness, such as an abandoning of your will, and an entire resignation of all you are and all you have to his [God's] will; such a contentedness and satisfaction to suffer reproach or any other evil for his sake, and in obedience to what you are persuaded to be his will.⁶⁰

In short, the mystics advocate complete mortification of the self and submission to the will of God: one must be “brought to die to self, to self-will”, they say, in order to “live wholly to the will of God”.⁶¹

In her letters to Arbuthnot, Cockburn rejects this outlook because it leaves no way in which to discern between the *true* will of God and the *mere delusion* that something is the will of God. On 25 April 1738, Arbuthnot sends Cockburn “a small Book of my Fathers”, a copy of Wolf von Metternich’s *Faith and Reason Compared* (1713), originally published as *Fides et Ratio* in Amsterdam in 1708, and edited with a preface by Poiret.⁶² Arbuthnot requests Cockburn’s opinion on this compilation of mystical writings, because she suspects it may be “a heap of ridiculous, unsolid stuff”.⁶³ In her reply of 22 June 1738, Cockburn affirms this viewpoint, noting that in their pursuit of faith as “an *Act of God* illuminating the Mind”,⁶⁴ the mystics leave “no defence against the illusions of seducing spirits, or a warm imagination”, because reason is “utterly exploded, and declared incapable to judge of divine things”.⁶⁵ Cockburn thus rejects “the whole Doctrine of the Book” for opening a way to enthusiasm, a religious faith based purely on fancy and imagination rather than reason.⁶⁶ She emphasizes that a mere inner persuasion that God has illuminated the mind is

no security against the delusions of other spirits, or of our own imaginations, if we unwarrantably give up our minds to expect divine illuminations, and are persuaded, that reason must not presume to examine, whether they are divine or not. One would

think these mystic writers scarce look upon reason as a gift of the all-wise God, but rather of some evil principle, so much they fear to be guided by it.⁶⁷

Here Cockburn's reasons for opposing the mystics resemble those of John Locke against the enthusiasts of his time: as religious fanatics, they fail to make reason the touchstone of their assent to religious propositions.⁶⁸ In book four, chapter nineteen of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689), Locke says that to assent to the truth of a divine revelation, we must have evidence to ensure that it is "not an Illusion drop'd in [my Mind] by some other Spirit, or raised by my own phancy".⁶⁹ To have grounds for assent, we "must know it [the revelation] to be so either by its own self-evidence to natural Reason; or by the rational Proofs that make it out to be so".⁷⁰ If we do not have these bounds to assent, he warns, then an enthusiast's appeal to inner persuasion might be used to justify any number of unintelligible religious propositions. Cockburn similarly asserts that God reveals religious truths by the light of reason, and thus reason may "presume to examine" whether an illumination is divine or not.

Cockburn also rejects the mystic's appeal to direct knowledge of God's will because this provides a potential justification for acting *contrary to morality*, for engaging in vicious actions, such as murder and theft, in the name of religion. In her letter of 10 February 1733, Arbuthnot mentions that someone in her circle has criticized Shaftesbury's conception of morality founded on human nature independently of knowledge of God's will. This local critic insists "that to us who believe in a God, his will is the rule of our actions *even though it should seem opposite to virtue*",⁷¹ that is, even in cases such as Abraham's intended murder of his son, or the Israelites' stealing from the Egyptians in Exodus. In response to this extreme submission to the will of God, on 2 March 1733 Cockburn says:

It was from this notion, that *the will of God might be contrary to morality*, that the Enthusiasts in *Cromwell's* time committed the most extravagant outrages, and the blackest villainies, under the pretence of serving the cause of God; and it is not to be doubted, that many of them really believed they were doing his will.⁷²

In her opinion, however, we must act on “external evidence” of the will of God: that is, we must act on claims that can be publicly verified through the light of reason, and not merely private or internal “revelation”, as it were. Cockburn insists that “those duties, which arise from the very frame of our nature (which we are sure is his workmanship) must be his will; and therefore nothing can be received for such, that is contrary to our natural notions of justice, goodness, veracity, &c. since God cannot have two contrary wills”.⁷³ Here, once again, Cockburn brings the foundations of moral obligation (the reasons or grounds for our moral actions) back to the natural capacity of human beings to discern the essential difference between right and wrong, and to act accordingly; it is our rational natures and not the “will of God” that obliges us to act morally.

Finally, Arbuthnot and Cockburn’s most extended discussion of mystical ideas concerns the views of a Genevan woman, Marie Huber, the anonymous author of *Monde fou préféré au monde sage* (1731) and *Lettres sur la religion essentielle à l’homme* (1738).⁷⁴ On 3 September 1743, Cockburn comments on *The World Unmasked* (1736), an English translation of Huber’s *Monde*. The work is a dialogue between three characters, Crito, Philo, and Erastus, who propose to examine the role of conscience in leading human beings to virtue. The main protagonist, Erastus, refers each man to his own conscience as the “Master” who can teach him which of his pleasures are lawful and which unlawful.⁷⁵ For most people, the difficulty lies in discerning when the dictates of conscience are the dictates of one invariable, eternal, and infallible Truth, and when they reveal only particular truths or even

falsehoods. This difficulty is compounded by certain obstacles on the path to Truth, such as a man's own wilful blindness and the prejudices of his education and upbringing. Erastus explains how the conscience might overcome these obstacles and gain impressions of one simple universal Truth. The path to Truth is not to be found through reasoning, he says. Truth is not revealed through rational demonstration, but rather by turning to the Truth, just as one opens one's eyes to the light.⁷⁶ Over the course of the dialogue, he reveals that “*uncreated, simple, universal* Truth, differs in nothing from God himself” and “that Men can know the Will of God only by the Light of Truth, or by the Testimony of Truth” directly through their own consciences.⁷⁷

In her commentary on *The World Unmasked*, Cockburn questions Huber's enigmatic views concerning the dictates of conscience. Cockburn says that the work “seemed so mysterious to me, (though very amusing) that when I had gone through it, I knew not what it aimed at; what was meant by the True, where it was to be found, and how we are to know it”.⁷⁸ In defence of Huber, Arbuthnot insists that *The World Unmasked* aims only to “show that every Mans Conscience if attended to with perfect sincerity would prove such a guide to him and so far enlighten his understanding, that he could not err”.⁷⁹ But Cockburn finds this hard to accept. She seems to suspect that the “True” might just be another way of referring to the immediate light of God. In her reply of 12 June 1744, Cockburn says of Huber that

if his [i.e., her] aim was to shew, that every man's conscience sincerely attended to would prove an unerring guide, why so much mysteriousness? why such dark and round-about ways, to inculcate so plain a proposition? (though by the way I think it a very false one.) How are we to know when we have found his [i.e., her] *true*? Which is I know not what, distinct from all particular truths. I like an author, who shews, that he has a clear idea of his subject, and that he honestly intends to convey his thoughts

to his readers, by expressing himself intelligibly, without endeavouring to puzzle or amaze. Otherwise, I am apt to suspect, either that he does not know himself what he aims at, or does not design his readers should.⁸⁰

In defence of Huber, Arbuthnot insists that a sincere disposition of character can prevent a moral agent from committing malignant errors. She approves Huber's mystical sentiments because she "makes Conscience to Coincide with Reason, whereas that all other of the Mysticks that I have read discards Reason quite which is a thing I cannot be reconciled to".⁸¹ Cockburn makes no further comment on this subject. But she would undoubtedly have insisted that if Huber intended for the "Truth" of conscience to be publicly verifiable through natural reason, then she should have explicitly and intelligibly said so.

On the whole, then, what does this opposition to mysticism reveal about Cockburn's moral naturalism? Earlier, we saw that Cockburn allowed that the will of God played an important motivational role in morality. Like Warburton, she agreed that knowledge of the will of God and of divine rewards and punishments provided necessary motivation for the practice of virtue in society. This concession called into question Cockburn's commitment to a deep moral naturalism. But when we ask "*how* do we know the will of God?", Cockburn's explanation appeals to the natural faculties of human beings, to their natural capacity for reason and reflection. Cockburn challenges any conception of God's will that does not conform to human reason and to our natural perception of the essential difference of things. While her moral theory does not reject appeals to the will of God, it does reject *unreasonable* appeals to the will of God. Essentially, then, this motivating force behind moral practice in civil society relies on humanity's natural capacity to discern that virtue should be rewarded and vice punished. When we take into account this epistemological aspect of Cockburn's naturalism—the idea that moral facts can be known only through natural and not supernatural

means (the immediate light of God)—Cockburn does not concede much to Warburton when she allows that knowledge of “the will of God” plays an important motivational role. Natural human reason is still the touchstone of moral knowledge.

3. Conclusion

Let us conclude by considering the extent of Cockburn’s radicalism in light of her moral naturalism. In my initial account of Cockburn’s views vis-à-vis Warburton, we saw that she defended Bayle’s notion of a society of virtuous atheists, and the idea that atheists are capable of feeling the obligatory force of morality, without knowing the will of God. We tentatively concluded that she might be described as “radical” insofar as she upheld a viewpoint that few people were willing to own in the mid-eighteenth century, a so-called radical enlightenment position on the independence of morality and religion. But then we saw that many of Cockburn’s ideas were founded on religious principles rather than secular motives: she did not challenge Warburton for anti-religious or sceptical reasons, but rather from concerns about atheists being properly accountable on Judgement Day. Her seemingly radical ideas concerning virtuous atheists were born of religious beliefs about human accountability to God. She also offered cautious support for Warburton’s view of the necessity of religion to society, and of the practical imperative to have knowledge of God’s will, and his future rewards and punishments, in order to induce the practice of virtue in society as a whole. Seen in this light, her comments on Warburton suggest that Cockburn’s moral theory leans just as much toward an Anglican moderate position as a radical enlightenment stance.

When it came to Cockburn’s criticisms of the mystic theology of Metternich and Huber, however, we discovered that Cockburn was suspicious of any appeals to the will of God that

were not firmly grounded in reason. Here, in her exchanges with another woman, we found a deeply naturalistic edge to Cockburn's epistemology. In her letters to Arbuthnot, she was strongly opposed to any mystical conception of the will of God without grounding in the "external evidences" of reason. She rejected the mystic's appeal to immediate divine inspiration on the grounds that the mystic had no way in which to discern between the true will of God and the mere delusion that something is the will of God; and because the mystic's appeal to direct knowledge of God's will provided a potential justification for acting contrary to morality. When we applied these ideas about the true will of God back to her commentary on Warburton, we could see that she offered him no very great concession. She granted that knowledge of the will of God might motivate and induce moral agents, practically speaking, to pursue virtue in society. But when we asked what it is that *grounds* our knowledge of the will of God, Cockburn once again returned to the evidences of natural reason: to humanity's natural capacity to discern the essential difference between good and bad, right and wrong. The basis for moral law in society, the thing that ultimately motivates and excites the moral agent into the practice of virtue, is the will of God—but only insofar as it conforms to natural human reason.

Can we finally conclude, then, that Cockburn belongs among "the radicals"? In response, it must be said that this close interplay between naturalistic and religious ideas in Cockburn's philosophy makes the usual "radical" label difficult to apply to her work. On the one hand, she takes a freethinking stance on the virtue of atheists, but on the other, she cites religious motives for doing so; she gives weight to knowledge of the will of God, but she insists that such knowledge must conform to reason; she allows that religion plays an important motivational role in morality, but she gives natural reason a prime role in discerning humanity's moral obligations; and while reason plays an important role in her thought, she

firmly believes that it is God who gives human beings this reason in the first place. The upshot is that, in Cockburn's writings on virtuous atheism, we find a complex and nuanced picture of moral naturalism in this period, one that defies easy categorisation as radical *simpliciter*.

Notes

¹ Warburton, *Divine Legation*, 61.

² Warburton, *Divine Legation*, 35.

³ Locke, *Letter*, 47.

⁴ Bayle, *Various Thoughts*, 212.

⁵ Shaftesbury, *Inquiry*, 191.

⁶ Warburton, *Divine Legation*, 41. To be fair to Shaftesbury, it should be noted that he gives an important role to religion as a motivating force in the practice of virtue (*Inquiry*, 177–92); he does not aim to overthrow religion, as Warburton suggests. On this topic, see Rivers, *Reason, Grace, and Sentiment*, chapter 2.

⁷ Anne Kelley has uncovered parish records suggesting that Cockburn may have been born in 1674. For details, see Kelley, *Catharine Trotter*, 1. I give her birthdate as “1679?” because in a letter to Pope dated 1738, Cockburn herself says that she is “~~not far from~~ about the borders of threescore [i.e., 60 years old]” (see British Library, London, Add. MS 4265, fol. 31; and Cockburn, *Works*, vol. I, xl). This letter could not be dated any earlier than 1735, since it refers to Pope's *Epistle to Dr Arbuthnot* (1735). Cockburn's gravestone also records that she died aged 70 in 1749.

⁸ For her collected writings, including her correspondence, see Cockburn, *Works*; Cockburn, *Philosophical Writings*; and Broad (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 125–253.

⁹ See Lutz and Lenman, “Moral Naturalism”.

¹⁰ See Bolton, “Some Aspects”, 577; Sheridan, “Cockburn’s Metaphysics of Morality”, 252; and Green, “Moral Philosophy of Their Own”, 93, 95.

¹¹ Sheridan, “Cockburn’s Metaphysics of Morality”, 265, 258. See also Sheridan, “Reflection, Nature, and Moral Law”, 136.

¹² Sheridan, “Reflection, Nature, and Moral Law”, 133, 136.

¹³ Cockburn, *Works*, vol. I, 57; Sheridan, “Reflection, Nature, and Moral Law”, 141.

¹⁴ Cockburn writes “I cannot find any other way to knowledge, or that we have any one idea not derived from sensation and reflection” (Cockburn, *Works*, vol. I, 53).

¹⁵ Green, “Moral Philosophy of Their Own”, 95.

¹⁶ Green, “Moral Philosophy of Their Own”, 93.

¹⁷ See Bolton, “Some Aspects”; Sheridan, “Catharine Trotter Cockburn”; Sheridan, “Cockburn’s Metaphysics of Morality”; Sheridan, “Reflection, Nature, and Moral Law”; Sheridan, “Virtue, Affection, and the Social Good”; Green, “Moral Philosophy of Their Own”; and Lustila, “Catharine Trotter Cockburn’s Democratization of Moral Virtue”.

¹⁸ Green, “Moral Philosophy of Their Own”, 95.

¹⁹ While editor Thomas Birch includes the bulk of Cockburn’s letters to Arbuthnot in the *Works*, he publishes only two letters from Arbuthnot to Cockburn, one dated 6 August 1741, the other 9 June 1747 (Cockburn, *Works*, vol. II, 303–306, 325–329).

²⁰ See British Library, London, Add. MSS 4264, 4265. The Cockburn-Arbuthnot correspondence from 1731 to 1748 consists in thirty-five letters by Cockburn and twenty-one by Arbuthnot. A large selection of this correspondence has been recently published in Broad (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*.

²¹ Cockburn, *Remarks Upon Some Writers*, 443n.

²² For Cockburn's clearest statements of her moral views, see Cockburn's *Remarks Upon Some Writers*, her *Remarks Upon Dr Rutherford*, and her letters to Thomas Sharp (Cockburn, *Works*, vol. II, 353–460), as well as her letters to Arbuthnot and Edmund Law (Cockburn, *Works*, vol. II, 255–346, 347–352; Broad [ed.], *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 125–265).

²³ Cockburn says “God commanded it [virtue] because he saw that it was absolutely right and fit, the indispensable duty of a rational and social being” (Cockburn, *Works*, vol. I, 423).

²⁴ Cockburn, *Works*, vol. II, 333; Broad, (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 238.

²⁵ Warburton, *Divine Legation*, 36.

²⁶ Warburton, *Divine Legation*, 37.

²⁷ Warburton, *Divine Legation*, 36.

²⁸ Warburton, *Divine Legation*, 42.

²⁹ Warburton, *Divine Legation*, 35. See Bayle, *Various Thoughts*, 222.

³⁰ Bayle, *Various Thoughts*, 222.

³¹ Warburton, *Divine Legation*, 45.

³² Warburton, *Divine Legation*, 47.

³³ Warburton, *Divine Legation*, 48.

³⁴ Warburton, *Divine Legation*, 55.

³⁵ Warburton, *Divine Legation*, 56.

³⁶ Warburton, *Divine Legation*, 57–58.

³⁷ Cockburn, *Remarks Upon Some Writers*, 443.

³⁸ Cockburn, *Remarks Upon Some Writers*, 446.

³⁹ Cockburn, *Remarks Upon Some Writers*, 446.

⁴⁰ Cockburn, *Remarks Upon Some Writers*, 444.

⁴¹ Cockburn, *Remarks Upon Some Writers*, 450.

⁴² Cockburn, *Remarks Upon Some Writers*, 449 (quoting from Warburton, *Divine Legation*, 51).

⁴³ Warburton, “Preface”, in Cockburn, *Remarks Upon Dr Rutherford*, 3.

⁴⁴ Warburton, “Preface”, in Cockburn, *Remarks Upon Dr Rutherford*, 4.

⁴⁵ See British Library, London, Add. MS 4264, fol. 233; Broad (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 239. This letter is abridged in Cockburn, *Works* (vol. II, 333), omitting any criticism of Warburton. In 1749–51, Warburton was closely involved in the publication of Cockburn’s *Works* and there is evidence that he asked Thomas Birch to omit passages he did not like (see Nichol [ed.], *Pope’s Literary Legacy*, 25–6, 35–6).

⁴⁶ Richard Hurd reports that Warburton first received a letter from Cockburn, purposefully designed “to draw Mr Warburton into an explanation of his system concerning *Moral Obligation*” (Hurd, “Discourse by Way of General Preface”, in Warburton, *Works*, vol. I, 42). But in a letter to Arbuthnot dated 12 June 1744, Cockburn indicates that Warburton first requested her postal address in order to write to her—it was he who initiated the exchange, not the other way around (Cockburn, *Works*, vol. II, 314; Broad (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 210).

⁴⁷ See Warburton, *Works*, vol. I, 147–150; see also Nichol [ed.], *Pope’s Literary Legacy*, 5–7.

⁴⁸ Cockburn, *Remarks Upon Dr Rutherford*, 48.

⁴⁹ Cockburn, *Remarks Upon Dr Rutherford*, 107.

⁵⁰ Cockburn, *Remarks Upon Some Writers*, 449.

⁵¹ Cockburn, *Remarks Upon Some Writers*, 446.

⁵² Cockburn, *Remarks Upon Some Writers*, 442.

⁵³ Cockburn, *Remarks Upon Some Writers*, 449.

⁵⁴ Cockburn, *Remarks Upon Some Writers*, 442.

⁵⁵ Green, “Moral Philosophy of Their Own”, 95.

⁵⁶ For overviews of Cockburn’s correspondence with Arbuthnot, see Bigold, *Women of Letters*; and Kelley, *Catharine Trotter*.

⁵⁷ On this movement, see Henderson, *Mystics of the North-East*.

⁵⁸ For further details on Garden, see Henderson, *Mystics of the North-East*, 32–39; for Garden’s correspondence, see 191–262.

⁵⁹ See Ann Arbuthnot to Catharine Cockburn, 30 March 1745; in the British Library, London, Add. MS 4265, fol. 181v; Broad (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 229.

⁶⁰ George Garden to James Cunningham, 2 December 1709, in Henderson, *Mystics of the North-East*, 209. It should be noted that Garden himself does not accept this viewpoint without question.

⁶¹ George Garden to James Cunningham, 2 December 1709, in Henderson, *Mystics of the North-East*, 212.

⁶² Although *Fides et Ratio* has been attributed solely to Metternich, it is in fact a collection of writings by several mystical authors, Metternich among them. See Krop, “*Fides et Ratio*”, 47–8, 50.

⁶³ Ann Arbuthnot to Catharine Cockburn, 25 April 1738, in the British Library, London, Add. MS 4265, fol. 170; Broad (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 178.

⁶⁴ Metternich, *Faith and Reason*, 77.

⁶⁵ Cockburn, *Works*, vol. II, 293; Broad (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 180.

⁶⁶ Cockburn, *Works*, vol. II, 293; Broad (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 181.

⁶⁷ Cockburn, *Works*, vol. II, 293–294; Broad (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 181.

⁶⁸ On the topic of enthusiasm in Locke, see Jolley, “Reason’s Dim Candle”. On Cockburn’s indebtedness to Lockean epistemology, see Sheridan, “Reflection, Nature, and Moral Law”.

⁶⁹ Locke, *Essay*, IV.xix.10. My references to Locke’s *Essay* are by book, chapter, and section number.

⁷⁰ Locke, *Essay*, IV.xix.11.

⁷¹ Ann Hepburn to Catharine Cockburn, 10 February 1732, in the British Library, London, Add. MS 4265, fol. 149; Broad (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 142 (my italics).

⁷² Cockburn, *Works*, vol. II, 269; Broad (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 144.

⁷³ Cockburn, *Works*, vol. II, 269–270; Broad (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 145.

⁷⁴ Arbuthnot mistakenly attributes these works to B at Louis de Muralt (1665–1749), the Swiss travel writer and author. Huber’s authorship of *Lettres sur la religion* was only first made public in 1754.

⁷⁵ Huber, *World Unmasked*, 15.

⁷⁶ Huber, *World Unmasked*, 61, 85, 113–114.

⁷⁷ Huber, *World Unmasked*, 104, 113.

⁷⁸ Cockburn, *Works*, vol. II, 313; Broad (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 205.

⁷⁹ Ann Arbuthnot to Catharine Cockburn, 13 October 1743, in the British Library, London, Add. MS 4265, fol. 177v; Broad (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 207–208.

⁸⁰ Cockburn, *Works*, vol. II, 316; Broad (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 211–212.

⁸¹ Ann Arbuthnot to Catharine Cockburn, October or November 1744, in the British Library, London, Add. MS 4265, fol. 180v; Broad (ed.), *Women Philosophers: Selected Correspondence*, 221.

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