

## HENRY LEE'S HINGE EPISTEMOLOGY

*UDC 165.4*

**Miloš Vuletić**

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Department of Philosophy, Serbia

**Abstract.** *I argue that Henry Lee is the earliest known proponent of moderate anti-liberalism in epistemology. I reconstruct Lee's argument for the conclusion that Locke's epistemological views lead to skepticism. Then I show that Lee proposes a type of hinge epistemology as a way of dealing with the skeptical challenge. He argues that we must assume the truth of epistemic hinge propositions, such as the proposition that our cognitive faculties are veridical. Such propositions do not require proof or justification and are not provable because, in Lee's view, they are presupposed by all rational inquiry. Finally, I show how Lee's brand of moderate anti-liberalism can deal with one notable recent objection to contemporary relatives of his view.*

**Key words:** *Henry Lee, hinge epistemology, skepticism, anti-liberalism.*

### 1. LIBERALISM AND ANTI-LIBERALISM

Ordinary perceptual judgments—for instance, the judgment “That’s a bird” uttered immediately upon undergoing a visual experience as of something small and green flying by—can have positive normative standing. They can be justified, they can be warranted, they can even be knowledgeable. In what way do perceptual judgments acquire their normative standings? What is it that rationally grounds perceptual judgments? These questions are quite important, given how ubiquitous perceptual judgments are in our everyday transactions with our peers and with our environment, and given their indispensability in reasoning.

Two major approaches to answering these questions dominate the landscape of contemporary debates: liberalism and anti-liberalism. The common ground for both positions is that the following two conditions must obtain for a perceptual judgment to be justified (or warranted, etc.): (i) occurrence of an appropriate sensory experience, and (ii) absence of defeaters (Coliva 2015, 21). In our example, in order for the judgment “That’s a bird” to be justified it is necessary that the subject who made the judgment had an appropriate experience and that there were no defeaters such as someone’s reliable

---

Received September 12, 2021 / October 7, 2021

**Corresponding author:** Miloš Vuletić

University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philosophy, Čika Ljubina 18-20, 11000 Belgrade, Serbia

E-mail: milos.vuletic@f.bg.ac.rs

testimony that there are small, green flying robots in the area, or the subject's knowledge that half an hour earlier he had ingested a hallucinogenic substance.

Liberalism is the view that nothing over and above the two necessary conditions is required for a perceptual judgment to be justified. Jim Pryor's dogmatism is the most prominent representative of contemporary liberalism in epistemology (Pryor 2000; see also Huemer 2001). According to Pryor, experience in which it seems to a subject that *p* is the case secures an immediate, fallible, *prima facie* justification for the belief that *p*. If you happen to see something small and green flying by, Pryor's dogmatism would have it that you have an immediate—i.e., such that it does not require justification or evidence for any other belief—*prima facie* justification to believe that a bird flew by.<sup>1</sup>

Anti-liberalism is the view that perceptual judgments' justification requires the fulfillment of further conditions in addition to the occurrence of an adequate experience and the absence of defeaters. In particular, in order for perceptual judgments to be justified, certain general propositions must be assumed as well, such as the proposition that there is an external world, or the proposition that our perceptual faculties are mostly reliable. We need such general assumptions, according to anti-liberals, in order to overcome our "cognitive locality." In other words, these general assumptions need to be in place so we can find ourselves in a position to legitimately bring our subjective experiences to bear on the domain of objects in the external world.<sup>2</sup> Anti-liberals fall into two camps, depending on whether they think these general assumptions are themselves in need of warrant or justification. Conservatism about perceptual justification is the view that such warrant is required for general assumptions. Moderatism about perceptual justification is the view that general propositions required for the overcoming of our cognitive locality cannot be justified or warranted. Following Wittgenstein's remarks in *On Certainty*, moderate anti-liberals call these general propositions "hinges":

341. That is to say, the questions that we raise and our doubts depend on the fact that some propositions are exempt from doubt, are as it were like hinges on which those turn.

342. That is to say, it belongs to the logic of our scientific investigations that certain things are in deed not doubted. (Wittgenstein 1969)

In addition to helping overcome our cognitive locality, hinges also prove to be of use in responding to skeptical challenges. When a skeptic raises doubts regarding such hinge propositions as "there is an external world," a moderate anti-liberal may reject the challenge as illegitimate: such propositions cannot be justified, so the skeptic is actually grounding their challenge in a mistaken conception of epistemic rationality.

Historically speaking, moderate anti-liberalism is usually most closely associated with Wittgenstein.<sup>3</sup> The view is sometimes associated with deeper historical roots. Annalisa Coliva finds the view to be a feature of several different philosophical movements and approaches. For instance, she notes that moderate anti-liberalism is the outcome of certain forms of naturalism, as well as a commitment of some pragmatist theories (Coliva 2015, 39–40). However, none of these cases lends itself to an unambiguous attribution of the view as a deliberately adopted position. What I aim to do in this paper is to show that in early modern philosophy we can find one such clear and unambiguous example of a deliberately adopted moderate anti-liberalism. The earliest known hinge epistemologist is the English philosopher Henry Lee.

<sup>1</sup> The justification in question is propositional, not doxastic.

<sup>2</sup> See (Coliva 2015) and, for a somewhat different conception of this notion (Wright 2004).

<sup>3</sup> Though see (Moyal-Sharrock 2004) for a dissenting view. For further historical background, see (Coliva 2010) and (Coliva and Moyal-Sharrock 2016).

## 2 HENRY LEE'S EPISTEMOLOGY

Henry Lee was one of the earliest and staunchest critics of Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. In his only philosophical work, *Anti-Scepticism: or, Notes Upon each Chapter of Mr. Lock's Essay concerning Humane Understanding* (1702), Lee took it upon himself to carefully engage with Locke's views and subject them to thorough criticism. Much like other notable contemporary opponents of Locke's—John Sergeant and Edward Stillingfleet, for instance—Lee too was spurred by what he perceived as dangerous skeptical tendencies in Locke's philosophy.<sup>4</sup> To his early critics it seemed particularly problematic that Locke's thoroughgoing empiricism (of which the rejection of innate ideas is an integral part) was coupled with a representationalist theory of ideas. It seemed clear to them that these stances jointly lead into a dangerous skepticism about moral and theological doctrines.

Lee focuses his attack on specific theses of Locke's which, in his opinion, lead to skeptical consequences.<sup>5</sup> First, Lee targets Locke's view of knowledge as perception of agreement or disagreement between ideas (*Essay*, IV.i.2). This is a crucial plank in Lee's case against Locke, and one he sought to establish as thoroughly as possible: if knowledge is confined to relations between ideas, then we cannot hope that it extends to objects outside of the mind—we cannot, in other words, escape our cognitive locality. Second, Lee denies that there are simple ideas. Finally, Lee rejects the existence of general abstract ideas in the mind. Particular ways in which Lee develops his case against these theses and the background assumptions he employs constitute a rich critical framework within which his hinge epistemology takes shape. Two elements of Lee's framework have received treatment in recent publications: (Adriaenssen 2011) is a seminal work on Lee's criticism of Locke's epistemology, while (Benschop 1997) persuasively argues that Lee's attack on abstract ideas largely anticipates Berkeley's more famous treatment of the same topic. In section 2.1 I will show that both of these critical strands are the elements required for a full reconstruction of Lee's case against Locke and in favor of his own epistemological view. Then in section 2.2 I will show that Lee's view falls squarely within the moderate anti-liberal camp. I will close out, in section 3, by arguing that Lee's brand of hinge epistemology has the resources to respond, at least in principle, to an important recent objection to moderate anti-liberal views.

### 2.1. "There can be no certainty by the way of Ideas only"

Locke draws a distinction between two kinds of certain knowledge: one that consists in perceiving the agreement or disagreement of our ideas, and one that, in addition to this perceived agreement or disagreement, is also accompanied by the conviction that those ideas "agree with the reality of things" (*Essay*, IV.iv.18). He also points out that the latter—what he calls certain *real* knowledge—is the more important and valuable of the two. If our knowledge terminates in ideas and not in things, its truths bear no more weight "than the discourse of a man, who sees things clearly in a dream, and with great assurance utters them" (*Essay*, IV.iv.2). Hence Locke's stressing of the value of real knowledge.

---

<sup>4</sup> Locke's *Essay* came under fire from other directions and for different reasons as well. In particular, it was ill-received due to its apparent advancement of challenges to certain Christian doctrines. See pp. 198–9 of (Hutton 2015).

<sup>5</sup> *Anti-Scepticism* (AS), Preface.

Lee agrees that only knowledge that terminates in things is worth its name (*AS*: Preface). But he sees a deep problem in Locke's position. In Lee's view, the requirement that we ascertain the agreement between ideas and things in the external world in order to acquire real certain knowledge cannot be met.<sup>6</sup> Lee's argument for the claim that the agreement between ideas and things outside of the mind cannot be established proceeds in two stages. In the first stage, Lee establishes that there is a radical metaphysical disconnect between the mental realm to which perceptions belong and the realm of external, material objects. The burden of the second stage is to show that the assumptions of Locke's epistemology make it impossible to establish a match between material and mental items. I will proceed to reconstruct and examine both stages of Lee's argument.

Lee adheres to the well-known early modern metaphysical picture of the mind and the world outside of it. Perceptions, like all other mental occurrences, are fundamentally different from extra-mental occurrences. The external world is the world of solid, extended bodies that are at rest or in motion, whereas mental entities and their properties are essentially different and share no properties with the material world. The mind and the external world are the domains of two radically different kinds of substance and "there is no Connexion in Nature between that which is wholly within us, as *Ideas* are, and that which is wholly without us, as the Objects are" (*AS*: 303; see also 338–39). This being so, we should not expect mental items to be informative of the nature and states of non-mental items. Nevertheless, the obtaining of some further facts might facilitate the ascertaining of the match between perceptions and the material world.<sup>7</sup> For one thing, it could be the case that some sort of resemblance obtains between certain mental items and material items—perhaps the kind of resemblance Locke claims to obtain between primary qualities and ideas of primary qualities (*Essay*, II.viii.15). If there were ideas that bear resemblance to qualities of external objects, we could, in principle, establish whether our perceptions are veridical or not by comparing them to these ideas. Thus Locke's notion of real certain knowledge could prove to be useful.

The second stage of Lee's argument aims to establish that there are no such "third items" that could mediate the comparison between the world and our perceptions of it. The argument is here divided into two branches. One is concerned with showing that abstract ideas cannot serve as the "third item"; the other treats the possibility that items other than abstract ideas serve as the "third item."<sup>8</sup> A key passage in which Lee develops this line of argument is worth quoting at length:

"He says, Knowledge is real only so far as there is a conformity between our *Ideas* and the reality of things. But this very conformity, I say, is not discoverable in any Case whatever merely by *Ideas* (...) [N]o Man, I say, can discover that any Body is really White, or has the real Power of exciting that Sensation by *Ideas*, unless he has a

<sup>6</sup> (Adriaenssen 2011) shows that Lee and Sergeant both take aim at this feature of Locke's epistemology and argues that their respective critical arguments differ insofar as Sergeant takes Locke's theory of ideas to be the component of his view that brings about the problem, while Lee does not.

<sup>7</sup> (Adriaenssen 2011) develops a different reconstruction of Lee's argument. Firstly, what I take to be two stages of Lee's arguments are in Adriaenssen's view two separate arguments against Lockean real certain knowledge. For Adriaenssen's interpretation to be correct, it would have to be the case that the difference in substantial nature between the mind and the external world alone clinches the case for the impossibility of ascertaining the conformity between perceptions and the world. But it does not, as I argue in the main text. Secondly, Adriaenssen does not make room for Lee's rejection of abstract ideas in the argument, whereas I take it that Lee's argument critically depends on the rejection of abstract ideas.

<sup>8</sup> (Adriaenssen 2011) considers the second of the two cases to be an argument in its own right. See footnote 10 for reasons why I think Lee's argumentation should be regimented in a different way.

dormant or abstract *Idea* of Whiteness, with which upon occasion he compares his actual Perceptions, and I must deny that any Man has any such *Idea* till I am better informed. (...) When I see Milk, I know or perceive it is White; when I see Snow, I perceive it is also White; and the word *Whiteness* is only the common Name which I use to signify that the Mode of my Perception is the same, or much the same when I have happened to see either of those Two Bodies: But I have no abstract *Idea* of Whiteness present in my Mind with which I compared the Perceptions of the Two Bodies, but only compare the Perception I had of one Body with that of the other, and finding they agree to affect my sight much after the same manner, I give them that common Name of White; and the word Whiteness is only the sign of that comparison which I have made in my Mind, and not the sign of any present abstract *Idea*. Conformity, I suppose, signifies Comparison, and that is always between Two things at least; but if there be really no such thing as an abstract *Idea* of Whiteness (as I assert) then there is nothing in the Mind distinct from the Perceptions with which to compare them, and consequently their conformity to the reality of the things or the real power in the Objects, cannot be discovered for want of some real Third thing to make that discovery.” (AS: 257)

Lee's argument at this stage critically depends on his dismissal of certain kinds of ideas. We *could* establish that our perceptions are veridical, that they match how things are in the external world, if we had reliable ideas of qualities to compare them with. But we do not have such ideas, in Lee's view. We do not have “dormant” ideas of qualities, we do not have Lockean simple ideas, and we do not have general abstract ideas. Lee's rejection of simple ideas rests on his conviction that qualities can never be perceived distinctly and separately from objects to which they belong:

“However this is certain, [color or motion] can never be perceiv'd *distinctly* from that Body in which they are, and so are *complex Perceptions* or *Ideas*.” (AS: 49)

“Whiteness, Motion, Roundness, are the Names of white, moving, round Bodies (...) [W]e can have no Notion or Ideas in our Minds answering those *abstract* words, till we consider them as in, or united to some one or other individual Substance in which those Qualities or Properties are” (AS: 220).

If there are no simple ideas of qualities and no abstract ideas in the mind,<sup>9</sup> then there is no possible way of establishing by way of ideas that perceptions, which are modes of the spiritual substance, correspond with and conform to qualities of objects, which are modes of the material substance:

“Whatever is, was, or ever will be in the World, is either Substance or Mode of some Substance or other; and if we cannot possibly have an *Idea* of any Mode in the World abstracted from Substance, then 'tis impossible to prove ay Proposition to be a real Truth by the way of making an *Idea* the middle or proving Term.” (AS: 266)

This concludes the first branch of the second stage of Lee's argument. The second branch considers the possibility that something other than abstract ideas—say, an object of some sort—is the third thing that is used in proving that another thing exists. Lee

---

<sup>9</sup> Discussing Lee's case against general abstract ideas would take us too far afield; it is sufficient to note that the argument against Lockean real certain knowledge would not be complete if somehow there were real and adequate ideas of bodily qualities in the mind. See (Benschop 1997) for a discussion of Lee's arguments against abstract ideas and their relation to Berkeley's arguments.

dismisses this possibility rather quickly by arguing that it leads to infinite regress. If we invoke a particular thing in an effort to prove the existence of some other thing, then the former will require similar proof as well. And we cannot invoke further objects in such proof because infinite regress looms (AS: 291).

Let me summarize Lee's argument. Perceptions are mental items, identical to or constituted by modes of mental substance such as the sensation of white that occurs when one perceives a ball of snow. As such, perceptions are essentially different from external, material objects and qualities these objects are supposed to present to an experiencing subject's consciousness. This being so, establishing that a perception is veridical of an external object and its qualities requires some third item to be available, one that matches the character of the external object but is also of the same substantial nature as the perception. Simple ideas of qualities and general abstract ideas are the only salient candidates for this role available in Locke's theory. However, there are no such ideas, according to Lee, and so no comparison of the appropriate kind can occur. But even if there were other candidates for the role of the third item, they could not fulfill the requisite role because their own existence would be in need of proof, thus triggering an infinite regress. So it turns out that we cannot establish that our perceptions of external objects are veridical.

## 2.2. "We suppose the truth of our Senses and other Faculties"

If it cannot be proven that our perceptions are veridical of things outside of our minds, how can we hope to avoid the skeptical conclusion that there is no real knowledge? Lee's answer is that there are certain presuppositions in place that we can rely on to secure the reality of our knowledge of external things. Most importantly, we presuppose that our cognitive faculties are reliable and trustworthy:

"[I]f we cannot know a real Truth by the way of *Ideas*; by what other way can we come to the Knowledge of that Relation between the parts of any Proposition? To which I give these plain and obvious Answers.

1. We suppose the Truth of our Senses and other Faculties; and this I say is no precarious Supposition, because the Mind does in all and every one of its Transactions unavoidably, whether it will or not, make that tacit Supposition; it does not require the least Proof of it, or indeed is capable of it, because it supposes it in all proofs in all its rational or deliberate acts whatever." (AS: 267)<sup>10</sup>

There are three important points to unpack here. First, Lee's insistence on the supposition that our cognitive faculties are veridical is an instance of invoking innate principles that was fairly ubiquitous at the time. Locke's attack on innate ideas is primarily a polemic against those philosophers and clergymen who took it that we can freely rely on a number of general, speculative propositions that are, supposedly, innate to our minds.<sup>11</sup> Whereas most of the other advocates of innate principles typically included among them general moral and metaphysical propositions, Lee distinguished himself by his insistence that the reliability of our senses belongs to this class as well. Elsewhere, Lee plainly exhibits his adherence to the more common innate principles such as the principle that every thing is the same with itself in all respects or that every effect must have a cause.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> See also (AS: 337).

<sup>11</sup> See (Rickless 2007) for a thorough discussion of both the views Locke was targeting and of his arguments.

<sup>12</sup> See (AS: 7) for further examples of innate principles Lee endorses.

The second point to note is that for Lee the presupposition that our cognitive faculties are veridical is effectively a *hinge proposition*: it is needed in order to secure justification of our perceptual beliefs and judgments, *and* it performs this role while itself not being amenable to proof or justification. Proof—or warrant, or justification—of this hinge principle is not needed, but it is also such that we *cannot* supply it.

The third point provides the reason for Lee's conviction that the veridicality of our faculties cannot be justified. In his view, this supposition is constitutive of all our rational discursive activities and as such cannot be subject to rational grounding on pain of committing the error of assuming what one aims to prove. To fully appreciate Lee's explanation of this point, we need to lay out his views on truth and semantics.

Lee takes the conventional position that mental items, such as ideas and thoughts, signify ("are the signs of") things, ordinary objects in the world and their qualities (AS: 240). Words, on the other hand, signify ideas or thoughts. If it happens that a word or an idea signifies no real thing, then it is utterly devoid of sense. Lee couples this conception of meaning with the view that truth is "the Conjunction or Disjunction of things according to the real Relation those things have to each other" (AS: 264) and that truth is "Conjunction or Disjunction of Words that are terminated in things" (AS: 240).<sup>13</sup> Given his views on semantics, Lee takes it that the very fact that we consider our utterances meaningful shows that we presuppose the existence of external things:

"Ideas are the signs of the Things, as Words are the signs of the Ideas or Thoughts; but neither the Idea, or the Words are Signs of anything, if the things themselves be not suppos'd; they signifie nothing, the Ideas are meerly imaginary or nothing rather, nor the Words any more than meer Sounds. So that if the Truth of our Sensation and other Faculties be not presuppos'd (though I think the Mind does always presuppose that) there can be no Certainty, no Knowledge of the Truth of those very Propositions which the Mind has by Intuition." (AS: 240)

More importantly, given that the very notion of truth is tied to the presupposition that there are things which the constituents of meaningful propositions signify, it is clear why there cannot be rational justification of that presupposition. The notion of truth is fundamental to—we might even say *constitutive of*—all the rational transactions we engage in. If we cannot conceive truth itself apart from reality of external things, then the reality of external things is entailed by all meaningful propositions and inferential moves we might make using them. And presupposing the existence of things outside of the mind presupposes, in turn, "also the truth of your Senses and other Faculties" (AS: Preface). According to Lee, we cannot justify the hinge proposition that our senses and other cognitive faculties are veridical because the very notions of truth and meaning require that proposition to be true.

Lee contrasts his favored notion of truth to the one Locke advocates. Locke's notion of truth allows that truth may not just consist in agreement or disagreement of things signified, but also in agreement or disagreement of signs of things, i.e., words and ideas (*Essay* IV.v.6). This allows for truths that consist in agreement or disagreement of abstract ideas. Lee's a nominalist who rejects abstract ideas, as we saw, and so finds Locke's notion of truth highly objectionable.

Lee's views on truth and semantics, together with his epistemological stance, give shape to a cohesive conception of rationality. Locke's empiricism is largely prompted by his

<sup>13</sup> (Adriaenssen 2011, 39–43) does an excellent job of unpacking Lee's views on truth and showing how they conform to views found in logic textbooks of the time.

opposition to rationalist views that come with substantial truths built into them. He was worried that reliance on unquestionable innate principles will hinder inquiry, provide refuge to dogmatism and lead to errors.<sup>14</sup> Proper employment of reason does not, in Locke's view, call for any innate principles to be available. It is not difficult to see that Locke did have a point, one that was particularly apt in the age in which religious dogmas still held sway over many areas of intellectual inquiry. Lee's opposition to Locke is noteworthy because it is founded upon a competing conception of rationality. Lee finds that supposing our cognitive faculties are veridical and that there exist things outside our minds is something we cannot help but do. This is so not simply because it is psychologically unavoidable. It is so also because it is an essential part of what it means to engage in rational inquiry. And the conception of rationality that Lee favors is not, in his view, in any respect inferior to the conception which he ascribes to Locke: Lee states that it is "every whit as rational to suppose such things as are not capable of a Proof as to doubt of every thing" (AS: 336). Which of the two we end up endorsing is for Lee neither optional (as we saw) nor is this choice without consequences. Lee believes that if we accept Locke's views on truth and foundations of knowledge the tenets of both natural and revealed religion will be threatened (AS: Preface). For instance, Lee singles out his worry that *a posteriori* proofs of God's existence—and he himself favors such proofs—do not survive being coupled with Locke's empiricism. In case we cannot assume the existence of God's creation, and given that no such proof is forthcoming by way of ideas (as Lee attempts to show), proofs of God's existence from effect to its cause cannot get off the ground.

### 3 HINGE EPISTEMOLOGY THEN AND NOW

Henry Lee's views constitute an early—I believe the earliest known, at least as of now—version of hinge epistemology. Justification of our perceptual beliefs, in Lee's view, requires the assumption that our senses and other cognitive faculties are veridical. This assumption is not amenable to proof or justification; it is a proper hinge proposition. It is also constitutive of epistemic rationality insofar as it must be assumed if we are to make proper sense of the truth and falsity of our assertions and propositions. The combination of these two features—reliance on unprovable epistemic hinge propositions and the constitutive role of hinge propositions in epistemic rationality—ally Lee's view closely with contemporary moderate anti-liberals and distinguish him among his contemporaries.

It is worth noting that the specific way in which Lee accounts for the role of hinge propositions as constitutive of rationality provides his view with a dialectical advantage over some of the similar views on offer today. Consider the following worry raised by Crispin Wright in response to Coliva's hinge epistemology:

"[I]f it really were constitutive of our conception of rational empirical enquiry to assume that there is an external material world, then there should be a kind of unintelligibility about a sceptical challenge to the rationality of this assumption which would be at odds with the sense of paradox created by the best sceptical arguments that challenge it. There is, it seems to me, an implicit tension in the very notion that elements which are constitutive of a concept—which belong primitively to its identity and are not sustained by other features of it—should be sufficiently opaque to be controversial and apparently vulnerable to philosophical challenge. . . . A proponent of

---

<sup>14</sup> See especially (*Essay* Liv.24 and IV.vii).



[moderatism] needs to explain how features that are constitutive of our concept of rational enquiry can nevertheless be sufficiently opaque to those who have mastered the concept to be *prima facie* coherently questionable.” (Wright 2012, 479)

Wright points out that if hinge propositions were constitutive of our conception of rationality, then our attitude to skeptical challenges should be different than it tends to be. Most of us find skeptical challenges gripping and in need of a response. We tend not to take them as misplaced worries that somehow offend against our very conception of rationality. But moderate anti-liberalism diagnoses skeptical challenges as precisely such. So the proponents of this view owe us an account of why this is so.

The fact that Lee's semantic views are in the background of his epistemology allows him to respond to this challenge. All it takes for skeptical doubts to present themselves as anything more than illegitimate challenges is for us to lose sight of the fact that all declarative propositions require for their truth the existence of a world outside of our minds. This is an error which we are prone to make, in Lee's opinion, quite easily if we are misled by the “way of ideas” advocated by Locke and other early modern authors. In Lee's opinion, this grave error gives rise to a line of thought that is actually incoherent and that no one in their right mind could entertain, just as we might expect from a challenge that runs counter to the very concept of epistemic rationality: “I can't believe He or any Man else can possibly be a complete or rational Sceptick; for he that is so, must draw his reasons for doubting of every thing from something, from some Topick or other, else it must be altogether groundless; and that is so manifest a Contradiction, and stares every one so fully in his Face, that he must be a Mad-man that can withstand it” (AS: Preface). For skepticism to even get off the ground certain assumptions are required that rely on the existence of items in the external world. So skepticism is contradictory. We may lose sight of this fact if we sever the connection between truth and the external world, as Locke does when allowing truth to be agreement or disagreement among ideas, which may lead one to consider skeptical reasoning to be cogent and even forceful. But ultimately, Lee thinks, this can be remedied by reverting to adequate semantic and epistemic views, dispelling thereby the illusion of coherence in the skeptic's reasoning.

Lee thus provides an explanation of the sort that Wright demands of moderate anti-liberals. The obvious drawback of his position is that it contains semantic commitments that are outdated and implausible. Still, this does not take away from the fact that he offers in his only philosophical work a complete and coherent epistemic theory that bears a striking resemblance to an important modern theory.

Henry Lee's philosophical contributions are not limited to his criticism of Locke, although he is a capable and perceptive critic who, arguably, carries the distinction of having come up with objections that would later famously be deemed by Hume—who was aware of these objections from Berkeley's work—as the greatest contribution to the republic of letters in the early eighteenth century. Lee has also put forth a positive proposal worthy of attention. In recent years great strides have been made in expanding the long-established canon of early modern philosophers and their works. Careful attention to the writings of once less prominent authors has led to the emergence of a richer and more complex understanding of the web of contributions and mutual influences in this period of singular importance.<sup>15</sup> Shedding light on

<sup>15</sup> For an overview of recent challenges to the traditional early modern canon, see (Shapiro 2016). (Hutton 2019) focuses specifically on the progress made in work on female authors of the period.

the contributions of minor authors like Lee is not a mere exercise in unearthing historical curiosities in an area of history of philosophy that is already well known. In such works we can and we do encounter—as is the case with Lee’s *Anti-Scepticism*—expressions of views and arguments that can readily engage in discussions of our own day.

**Acknowledgment:** This paper was presented at the “Science and Reality” conference held at the University of East Sarajevo in May of 2021. The research for this paper was conducted with the support of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development of the Republic of Serbia (grant no. 179067).

#### REFERENCES

- Adriaenssen, Han Thomas. “An Early Critic of Locke: The Anti-Scepticism of Henry Lee”. *Locke Studies* 11 (2011): 17–47.
- Benschop, Hans Peter. “Berkeley, Lee and Abstract Ideas”. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 5, 1 (1997): 55–66.
- Coliva, Annalisa. *Moore and Wittgenstein: Scepticism, Certainty, and Common Sense (History of Analytic Philosophy)*. Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire ; New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- . *Extended Rationality: A Hinge Epistemology*. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2015.
- Coliva, Annalisa, and Danièle Moyal-Sharrock, eds. *Hinge Epistemology*. Leiden ; Boston: Brill, 2016.
- Huemer, Michael. *Skepticism and the Veil of Perception*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001.
- Hutton, Sarah. *British Philosophy in the Seventeenth Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.
- . “Women, Philosophy and the History of Philosophy”. *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 27, 4 (2019): 684–701.
- Moyal-Sharrock, Danièle. *Understanding Wittgenstein’s on Certainty*. New York, NY: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2004.
- Pryor, James. “The Skeptic and the Dogmatist”. *Noûs* 34, 4 (2000): 517–49.
- Rickless, Samuel C. “Locke’s Polemic against Nativism”. In *The Cambridge Companion to Locke’s “Essay Concerning Human Understanding”*, edited by Lex Newman, 1st ed., 33–66. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Shapiro, Lisa. “Revisiting the Early Modern Philosophical Canon”. *Journal of the American Philosophical Association* 2, 3 (2016): 365–83.
- Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *On Certainty*. Edited by G.E.M. Anscombe and G.H. von Wright. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.
- Wright, Crispin. “Warrant for Nothing (and Foundations for Free)?” *Aristotelian Society Supplementary Volume* 78, 1 (2004): 167–212. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0309-7013.2004.00121.x>.
- . “Replies”. In *Mind, Meaning, and Knowledge: Themes From the Philosophy of Crispin Wright*, edited by Annalisa Coliva, 377–485. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

### EPISTEMOLOŠKA TEORIJA HENRIJA LIJA

*U ovom radu branim tezu da je Henri Li (Henry Lee) najraniji znani zastupnik umerenog anti-liberalizma u epistemologiji. Rekonstruišem Lijev argument za zaključak da epistemološki stavovi Džona Loka (John Locke) vode u skepticizam. Zatim pokazujem da Li kao odgovor skeptičkom izazovu izlaže epistemološku teoriju koja se oslanja na izvesne opšte epistemološke pretpostavke (murovski iskazi; iskazi okvira; “hinge propositions”). Ove pretpostavke – kao što je pretpostavka da su naše kognitivne moći pouzdane – niti zahtevaju dokazivanje ili opravdavanje, niti se mogu opravdati i dokazati. Razlog za nemogućnost njihovog dokazivanja, prema Liju, leži u činjenici da se njihova istinitost pretpostavlja u svakom racionalnom istraživanju. Na kraju, pokazujem kako Lijev umereni anti-liberalizam može da izađe na kraj sa jednim značajnim prigovorom upućenim današnjim verzijama ove pozicije.*

Ključne reči: *Henri Li, iskazi okvira, skepticizam, anti-liberalizam.*