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# Rethinking Early Modern Empiricism

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There is an enduring and influential story about empiricism, which runs as follows: from Locke onwards to Carnap, empiricism is the doctrine in which raw sense-data are received through the passive mechanism of perception; experience is the effect produced by external reality on the mind or 'receptors'. By extension, empiricism is the 'handmaiden' of experimental natural science, seeking to redefine philosophy and its methods in conformity with the results of modern science. In the following remarks I take up, piecemeal, some well-known cases or representative 'samples' of what we think of as 'canonical' empiricism (for reasons of brevity I'll focus on Locke)— in order to present a contrarian view of the canon. Not by suggesting, as people intelligently do, that it should be broadened or widened. But rather, by suggesting that the canonical figures did not quite think what we thought they thought, or at least what we often hear they thought. Specifically, that Lockean empiricism as a project is less about being the "servant" of the sciences and more about "matters concerning our conduct". That the Lockean inquiry into the mind is not a proto-"science of the mind" I have suggested elsewhere; here I emphasize the ethical or practical motivation of Locke's project.