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Censorship as a Typographical Chimera

John Milton and John Locke on Gestures¹

Abstract

The aim of my paper is to show some elements in Milton's and Locke's political writings, depending on their attitudes to different media. Milton in his argumentation against censorship must demonstrate that all the ancient instances for censorship, usually cited in his century, can be interpreted as examples of another phenomenon. However, Milton, analysing loci of Plato's Republic and some Scriptural topics, recognises the scope and significance of non-conceptual, non-printed, non-verbal forms of communication; he describes them as signs of childish, female or uneducated behaviours, as valueless phenomena from the point of view of political liberty incarnated in the freedom of press. John Locke's attitude is the same. I will show a chain of ideas, similar to Milton's one, in his Two Tracts on Government and in his Epistola de tolerantia, focusing the analyses on the concept of adiaphora (indifferent things).

Key words

censorship, orality, typographical age, Plato on censorship, adiaphora, John Milton's *Areopagitica*, John Locke's *Epistola de tolerantia*

The main topic of my presentation is John Milton's argumentation and art of rhetoric in his *Areopagitica*. However, Milton was not a researcher of the media, and his aim in his booklet was not an analysis of *homo typographicus*² thought on the freedom of thought itself, depended on the medium of the printed book; his thinking inevitably met the links between our ideals on the freedom of thought and different media by which we express them. Milton, by my interpretation, met the problem of media in his *Areopagitica* in two topics: (1) in his reinterpretation of the concept of Christian freedom; and (2) the reinterpretation of the Platonic tradition on writing and oral communication. We can observe a common characteristic in both cases through a historical approach: Milton, arguing for the *Liberty of Vnlicenc'd Printing*, found opinions

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John Milton, "Areopagitica", in: John Milton, *Complete Poetry and Selected Prose*, Cleanth Brooks (ed.), Random House, New York 1950, § 13, p. 685 (I have cited the text of the *Areopagitica* according to the text and page numbers of this edition, with Milton's orthography and his particular use of capitals and italics). Numbers of paragraphs of Milton's booklet, often used in interpretative publications on this work, are the same like in: John



and quotations in his culture, rooted in a non-typographical, mainly bi-medial state of a more archaic literacy – only, they were meaningless for an analysis of the world of printed books.

Milton's dilemma in his thought on media is not a special, personal peculiarity of a sensitive poet; it is a general ambiguity of the early modern Protestant political thinking. I can show this generality within the framework of my presentation by citing some parallel Lockean quotations in the present lecture.

A new interpretation of 'Christian freedom' in Milton's booklet

An important element of Milton's art of rhetoric is an opposition between the idealised image of London, the almost rebuilt Zion, living in Christian freedom and thus enjoying the previously unknown prestige of a European spiritual centre, and the sad continental situation which is a direct consequence of censorship. Leaning on a particular understanding of Christian freedom, he also wishes to persuade the audience of his fictive speech, the "Lords and Commons of England", that is, the two Houses of the Parliament, that book censoring is (1) an un-Christian thing; henceforth (2) its existence can only be explained by some Papal guile; since (3) there is nothing similar mentioned in either Scriptural, or the gentile tradition of the Antiquity, so it cannot be legitimated on these bases. Thus, Milton is forced by his own line of thought to frequently quote classical and Scriptural texts as examples, but he cannot offer comfortable examples for a *typographic culture* from Antique sources. It is impossible to find classical texts in which the judicially understood freedom or banning of books appears in exactly the same way as for a 17th-century Englishman reading printed books. Furthermore, the hands of the author of *Areopagitica* are tied also by the cultural environment, by contemporary political discourse: if he wishes to persuade his audience, he cannot make use of each and every element of his considerable classical and theological erudition, but only of those which are more or less known, and thus persuasive for his audience as well. Moreover, he also had to quote certain Scriptural fragments, frequently quoted in contemporary debates, and thus turning into almost compulsory citations.

1.

The first main idea of *Areopagitica*, important for my subject, is the reference of *Christian freedom* to the freedom of reading. Milton draws on Scriptural fragments which primarily referred to eating rules and ecclesiastical regulations, and which were often quoted since the debates of the Reformation. Milton transfers the meaning of Scriptural fragments to the freedom of reading books with reference to *spiritual food*:

"To the pure all things are pure, not only meats and drinks, but all kinde of knowledge whether of good or evill; (...) For books are as meats and viands are;"²

One must notice that Milton here does much more than give a free interpretation of Scriptural fragments. If we take into account the discourse of the age of Reformation and the author's age, we find reason to believe that these references and the emphasis on the concept of *Christian freedom* will recall in the 17th-century educated Protestant reader the terminology and issues of the *adiaphora*-debates accompanying Protestant cultures of the 16th and 17th century.

Adiaphora – Latinised by Cicero as *res mediae* – is a Stoic term for ethically neutral circumstances. In Christian thinking it means all the things out of a direct divine order, and in the Reformation it was a central concept of debates on the limits of the earthly and Ecclesiastical rule, and it became a new, relative secular sphere for the discussions on politics. Milton intends to do nothing less than reformulate this debate, which deeply interested contemporary Europe, for the benefit of spiritual freedom, and within it especially the freedom of the culture of printed books. Perhaps it is not too far-fetched to say that Milton wanted his public to accept that Christian freedom was a process and an attitude continuously improving, which started somewhere in Zurich, in the 16th century, with demonstrations such as Ulrich Zwingli's sausage frying in the Lenten period – see his *Von Erkiesen und Fryheit der Spysen*³ – and led to the freedom of the press in England. (Or the other way round: the freedom of the press in England is nothing else than one of the significant consequences of a true, “reformed Reformation”; as Milton wrote in his *Areopagitica*: “the reforming of Reformation it self”.) The freedom of sausage frying and the freedom of press are not so distant from each other in these *adiaphora*-debates than we might think today. The world of *adiaphora* not regulated by divine power, and thus confined to human judgement – that of individual and/or community, or secular political power – is the first scene available for the early modern political community, and consequently the debate on these issues is the first debate of political modernity.

The importance of *adiaphora*-debates in the political philosophy is completed by the fact that the 17th-century non-clerical thinkers in these debates always differentiate between masses and the elite, cultures of literacy vs. orality and gesture-languages. We can recognise this, for instance, by reading Locke's texts, with his permanently-ironical style while speaking about *adiaphora*. Every reader can see that *adiaphora* were *adiaphorous* for him in the modern English meaning of this word: *neutral* and *insignificant* (as a noun: *placebo*). It is true even in the case of his early writings such as his Erastian work, *Two Tracts on Government*.⁴ Later, in his *Epistola de tolerantia*, he changed his judgement, but did not change his ironic attitude.⁵ It is clear that his irony does not refer only to those that prohibit *adiaphora*, but also to all who regard

Milton, “Areopagitica”, in: Charles William Eliot (ed.), *The Harvard Classics*, Vol. III, Part 3, P. F. Collier & Son, New York 1909–1914, www.bartleby.com/3/3/ (Accessed on 28 December 2009).

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Its modern edition see: Huldreich Zwingli, “Von erkiesen und fryheit der spysen. Von ärgernuss verböserung. Ob man gewalt hab die spysen zu etlichen zyten verbieten. Meinung Huldreich Zwinglis zu Zürich geyrediget im MDXXII. jar.” in: Melchior Schuler, Johannes Schulthess (eds.), *Huldreich Zwingli's Werke. Erster Band. Der deutschen Schriften. Erster Theil. Lehr- und Schußschriften zum Behuse des Ueberschrittes in die evangelische Wahrheit und Fryheit von 1522 bis März 1524.*, Friedrich Schultheiß, Zürich 1828, pp. 1–29.

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It was a manuscript written for his educational work during his years in Oxford. For

its first printed edition see: John Locke, *Two Tracts on Government*, Philip Abrams (ed. and transl.), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1967.

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Locke's writing, written in Latin, has two well-known English translations: Popple's version, written in the 17th century and Gough's one, written in the 20th. Both of these translations were accused of misinterpretation of Locke's work, because of different reasons. I will quote both of these versions in order to correct them by comparison. See: John Locke, “A Letter Concerning Toleration”, William Popple (transl.), in: John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Civil Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, J. W. Gough (ed.), Basil Blackwell, Oxford 1946, pp. 121–165; John Locke, *Epistola de Tolerantia. A Letter on Toleration*, Raymond Klibansky (ed.) & J. W. Gough (transl. and intr.), Clarendon Press, Oxford 1968.

it as an important thing. In my opinion, this style is derived from his attitude as an educated man. Every religious opinion is serious enough for him to be answered theoretically, because they are explained in written and conceptual form, but rites and gestures could not be important things, their seriousness is only a product of superstitions and unskilled thinking of uneducated people. Let us see his opinion in his *Second* (so-called *Latin*) *Tract on Government*:

“Deus igitur humanae imbecilitati consulens cultum suum pro more uti ferret hominum sententia externis ritibus ornandum in medio reliquit, nec magis ex his cultores suos quam rex subditos fidemque et obsequium eorum ex corporis habitu aut vestium ornatu aestimat, nec fideles magis aut Christiani aut cives habendi sunt qui negligentius aut vilis ornantur.”⁶

However, while his opinion on the role of the magistrate changed in his *Epistola de tolerantia*, his attitude on non-written and mainly non-verbal communication rested:

“Licetne more Romano Deum colere? Liceat et Genevensi. Permissumne est Latine loqui in foro? Permittatur etiam quibus libet in templo. Fas est domi suae genua flectere, stare, sedere, gesticulationibus his vel illis uti, vestibis albis vel nigris, brevibus vel talaribus indui? In ecclesia nefas ne sit panem comedere, vinum bibere, aqua se abluere; reliquiae quae in communi vita lege libera sunt, in sacro cultu libera cuique ecclesiae permaneant.”^{7,8}

Milton also inherited this twofold discussion of Christian freedom, depending on whether he speaks about the book-culture of the educated, or the gestures and rites of the illiterate, and, as we shall see, he polarises the question even more than it has previously been.

2.

Milton – in accordance with his own Protestant tradition – derives his time’s censorship from the Papacy. The problem and its solution is quite clear for a 17th-century English Protestant: if the censorship is a non-Christian thing, but it is still existent in the Christian world, then the reason for it can only be the Papacy, meaning both the real Pope and the Papistical spirit which has not completely been cleared from Church of England.

Milton at this point considers his time’s censorship as an institution not too old, almost modern, appearing together with the book printing, and which is the dark side of Christian freedom spreading with Reformation and book printing, Rome’s new *answer* to a new phenomenon. At this point a possibility opens up for the re-thinking of tradition. The question rises: if censorship is something new, but there was no spiritual freedom in pre-censorship times, before the Reformation, then what prevented it if not censorship?

3.

It is not only theoretically that Milton tries to show the illegitimacy of Papal censorship, but he also strives to dispute the legitimacy of *any* tradition, considered valuable by itself and by its public, for *any kind* of censorship. First, he lists and explains from his own point of view certain scriptural fragments – all about harmful readings – which seem easily usable for censorship:

“*Salomon* informs us that much reading is a weariness to the flesh; but neither he, nor other inspir’d author tells us that such, or such reading is unlawful: [Ecclesiastes 7:12] (...) the burning of those Ephesian books by St. *Pauls* converts, (...) was a privat act, a voluntary act, [Acts 19:19]”⁹

Milton's confrontation with the bi-medial tradition of literacy of the Antiquity

While explaining the previous Scriptural fragments, Milton has to continuously face that these *speak about something else* than the subject of his debates with his contemporaries, and still, he has to find some kind of guidance from these. In my interpretation, while explaining these fragments, and mainly in his reflections on Plato, Milton gradually exceeds his time's *typographic* way of thinking and expression, conceiving surprisingly modern theses about the freedom of thinking and speech. However, in the *Areopagitica*, these new conceptions – as we shall see – can only be perceived on the level of ironic remarks. Apparently, it does not occur to Milton to consider the same rights for freedom necessary for the various forms of non-written communication that he is just claiming for books.

Following the above Scriptural examples, which are relatively easy to explain, Milton's explanations and references in the interpretation of tradition have a more nuanced approach to the world of book culture, hitherto considered unified. It is revealed that the content of books is not equally harmful or fruitful for educated and uneducated people, and thus their interdiction or allowance may have different consequences. The difference between the two types of readers lies exactly in their ways of reading and interpretation: an uneducated man only understands his reading if it is explained to him in words; if the logic of censorship is taken seriously, this means that not only books, but also *ways of interpretation* considered harmful should be interdicted in order to achieve the desired effect:

“Such tractates whether false or true are as the Prophetie of *Isaiah* was to the *Eunuch*, not to be understood without a guide. [Acts 7: 27-31] (...) evill doctrine not with books can propagate, except a teacher guide, which he might also doe without writing, and so beyond prohibiting.”¹⁰

In the course of his argumentation, Milton discovers almost by chance the *bi-mediality* preserved since the Antiquity and the Middle Ages in the world

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“Therefore God, indulging the weakness of mankind, left his worship undetermined, to be adorned with ceremonies as the judgment of men might determine in the light of custom; and he no more judges his subjects and their loyalty and obedience by their physical condition or the style of their clothes. But neither as Christian nor as subjects are those to be considered more faithful who are carelessly or meanly arrayed.” J. Locke, *Two Tracts on Government*, Philip Abrams (ed. and transl.), p. 191.

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“Is it permissible to worship God in the Roman manner? Let it also be permissible in the Genevan. It is allowed to speak Latin in the market-place? Let those who wish speak it in church too. Is it lawful for any man in his own house to kneel, stand, or sit, to make these gestures or those, to wear white or black, short or long garments? Let it not be made unlawful to eat bread, drink wine, or wash with water in church; and let whatever else is free by law in ordinary life remain free to every church in divine worship.” J. Locke, *Epistola de Tol-*

erantia. A Letter on Toleration, J. W. Gough (transl. and intr.).

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“Is it permitted to worship God in the Roman manner? Let it be permitted to do it in the Geneva form also. Is it permitted to speak Latin in the market-place? Let those that have a mind to it be permitted to do it also in the church. Is it lawful for any man in his own house to kneel, stand, sit, or use any other posture; and to clothe himself in white or black, in short or in long garments? Let it not be made unlawful to eat bread, drink wine, or wash with water in the church. In a word, whatsoever things are left free by law in the common occasions of life, let them remain free unto every church in divine worship.” J. Locke, “A Letter Concerning Toleration”, William Popple (transl.), p. 159.

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J. Milton, “Areopagitica”, § 13, pp. 690–691.

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Ibidem, p. 693.

of his time's uneducated people. It is this not yet fully developed *typographic* culture which makes Milton to consider book censorship inadequate as compared to its declared purposes. (It is a notable detail, that his example of the Ethiopian eunuch became a frequent reference for *bi-mediality* in the twentieth century research, in the same meaning, for instance, in the interpretation of Jan Assmann.¹¹)

This is the point where Milton changes his line of thought. Here, on the basis of his references to Plato, and besides the rethinking of the tradition of spiritual freedom, he says that censorship was unknown in the Antiquity, and what we are inclined to consider as such in tradition, is in fact something else. Now Milton analyses the consequences of interpreting an antique text according to the early modern way of thinking, that is, *typographically*. Milton notices in Plato's text that he does not suggest primarily the banning of books or concrete texts, but rather those factors which influence the *interpretation* of a text, factors which mainly pertain to performing arts: forms of music and dance, types and tones of musical instruments, and even certain movements of physical jerks. Plato speaks here – using a modern term – about an influence on interpretative communities, which form around texts, and especially on their elite, about the education of those who will be able to create such an interpretative “guidance” which Philip gave to the Ethiopian eunuch, and the importance of which for the commoners Milton himself acknowledged.

Plato in the third book of his *Republic* constructs quite clearly the elite interpretative community similar to the scribes of the East: he speaks about choosing persons who have the best memory (412e–413d), resembles their, and only their, relation to virtue of the engravement of letters (402a–b), and then leaves the task for this elite to interpret tradition for all the others, even if manipulating it for state reasons. (See the paragraphs about lying and about *fictive myths*.) Plato mostly exposes his thoughts quoted in *Areopagitica* in the context of education, which he thinks of as being outside legal regulation, at least in his *Laws*: “education (...) may be thought a subject fitted rather for precept and admonition than for law.”¹² In other places, however, Plato clearly admits the consequences of such a guidance of common culture: this means the need for a *re-sacralisation* and *re-contextualisation* of texts, and not only for the years of education, but for the whole duration of human life, and for all fields of culture: “if any one offers any other hymns or dances to any one of the Gods, the priests and priestesses, (...) shall (...) exclude him [for] all his life long”.¹³

From the perspective of this presentation, Plato's quoted texts can be interpreted as the rules of a special elite's education. The Athenian philosopher means to maintain at the same time the authority of the *professional rememberers* of oral societies, and the *scripturalist* elite of early written culture, and to teach this elite the thinking skills developed by contemporary literacy. The education of the elite is rational and initiatory at the same time. These texts speak with a surprising openness about the meaning of this education and its later uses: the elite's thinking skills enable rule over the commoners' beliefs, and minds which lack such techniques.

The irony of the Plato-references in the *Areopagitica* lies in the fact that, although the author notices that the interpretative context of theses of the Athenian philosopher is not the culture of printed books, he can only express the transposition of these ideas into the 17th century if he presumes that Plato speaks *all along* about the censoring of texts and documents. However, what is in Plato's case the centre of an elite culture, for Milton it is only hardly

noticed rural phenomenon. In Milton's time, the transmission of closed texts to the world of oral culture was partly found in the field of private life (that is why he speaks about the instruments and tunes of home music and singing, young people's chatting and entertainment) and partly in the case of uneducated commoners (that is why he sometimes mentions rustic instruments and refers to rural images). The result would then be a text in which everything that Plato has to say about the formation of elite interpretative community appears as the censorship of the "books" of non-readers. And when the text, nevertheless, refers back to *bi-mediality*, then we fail to take seriously that it has important things to say about spiritual freedom, because the way of saying it is taken from elite culture into a rustic context.

"The Windows also, and the *Balcone's* must be thought on, there are shrewd books, with dangerous Frontispieces set to sale; who shall prohibit them, shall twenty licencers? The villages also must have their visitors to enquire what lectures the bagpipe, and the rebbeck reads ev'n to the ballatry, and the gammuth of every *municipal* fiddler."¹⁴

The impossibility of censoring the elements of a building like books needs no further comment, but let us examine the following sentence: "what lectures the bagpipe and the rebbeck reads". *Rebbeck*, a rural form of violin with three fiddle-strings and bagpipes are not the instruments of concerts of the middle-class saloons. We are in a village pub, where, by Milton, these rural instruments not only *speak* about something, but *read*, or *hold a lecture* for the audience of a country inn. The word *lecture* – derived from *lectura* of the Medieval Latin – is a special, scholar word for a special, interpretative reading of a text, especially in a university.¹⁵ Target audience of Milton's booklet presumably had concrete experiences of this genre of speech; consequently the irony probably well understood in Milton's time lies in the fact that he raises for a moment villagers' performances to elite book culture, and all the things worth to be banned.

Conclusion

Milton's line of thought in the context of the whole work means a return to an idea apparently closed, but now highlighted from the opposite direction: it is a contrary approach to the reformulation of Christian freedom from the *adiaphora* debates to the freedom of the press. Referring to Zwingli's aforementioned case, and according to the text's inner line of thought, time would now come to defend the legitimacy, freedom, and especially notability of actions similar to fried sausage-eating in the Lenten period, even if in the sphere of

11 See: Jan Assmann, *Das kulturelle Gedächtnis. Schrift, Erinnerung und politische Identität in frühen Hochkulturen* (Cultural Memory. Writing, Remembrance, and Political Identity in Early Advanced Civilisations), Verlag C. H. Beck, München 1992. I have used the Hungarian version (Atlantisz, Budapest, 1999).

12 In my quotations of Plato I have used a quite ancient English version of Plato's texts, because the modern translations could be too far from Milton's style. See: Plato, *Laws*, Benjamin Jowett (transl.), Macmillan, New York 1892, VII, 788a.

13 Plato, *Laws*, VII, 799a–b.

14 J. Milton, "Areopagitica", § 13, p. 696.

15 For the cultural history of the genre *lectura* see the study of Jacqueline Hamese in: Guglielmo Cavallo, Roger Charier (eds.), *Storia della lettura nel mondo occidentale (A History of Reading in the West)*, Laterza, Roma 1995. It is available in French, too (Editions du Seuil, 1997). I have used the Hungarian version (Balassi, Budapest, 2000).

politics, starting from the already justified freedom of the press. While completing this task, however, Milton – though in a genial, thoughtful, and witty manner – fails. It is highly characteristic how he explains the quoted texts of Plato, guiding the discourse to fields familiar to him. In Milton's opinion, the Athenian master always thinks of education, and that is not a subject pertaining to the subordination of authorities and censorship. Regardless of this, Milton stresses, from the very beginning, that he only refers Christian freedom to adult people, and even from them only takes into account educated males. (This is not evident from the very beginning because he always speaks about the *extension* of freedom, and not its *narrowing*. He wanted an extension – *at least* to the circle of educated lay men.)

Milton's barrier to make one more, important step on the way of expanding the freedom of thinking and speech was in fact his own solution to include education in the debate: if the world outside book culture were a part of the life of children, women and common people, then its ways of expression would have no role in the intellectual freedom of spiritually adult people. (It was a suitable point to research the crucial roles of opinions on education in Milton's and Locke's systems of ideas, but I am afraid, it is far from today's topic of mine.)

Areopagitica reveals for a moment the possible existence and freedom of a culture outside book culture, but Milton instantly identifies this world with the world of children, uneducated commoners, and women, that is, with the world of people who are incapable and unworthy of freedom. Any novelty he finds in human communication is exiled to the countryside, or confined to children's room, women's quarter, schools, kitchens, and the inns of the lower classes. It is all the same to him where these apparently rudimentary *non-typographic* forms of expression of identity and opinion disappear as long as they stay away from the sphere of politics. Milton behaves here as someone who opens a yet unknown door only in order to close it with an even bigger lock.

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Cenzura kao tipografska himera

John Milton i John Locke o gestama

Sažetak

Namjera je ovog rada pokazati neke elemente Miltonovih i Lockeovih političkih spisa, ovisno o njihovim odnosima prema različitim medijima. Milton u svojoj argumentaciji protiv cenzure mora pokazati da se sve drevne instance za cenzuru, često citirane u njegovom stoljeću, mogu interpretirati kao primjeri drugog fenomena. Međutim, Milton prepoznaje, analizirajući mjesta u Platonovoj Državi i nekim biblijskim temama, doseg i značaj nepojmovnih, netiskanih, neverbalnih oblika komunikacije; on ih opisuje kao znakove djetinjastog, ženskog ili neobrazovanog ponašanja, kao beznačajne fenomene iz perspektive političke slobodne utjelovljene u slobodi tiska. Stav Johna Lockeja je isti. Pokazat ću lanac ideja, sličan Miltonovom, u njegovim djelima Dvije rasprave o vladi i Pismo o toleranciji, fokusirajući analizu na pojam adijafore (indiferentnih stvari).

Ključne riječi

cenzura, usmenost, tipografsko doba, Platon o cenzuri, adijafora, John Miltonova *Areopagitika*, John Lockeovo *Pismo o toleranciji*

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Die Zensur als typografische Chimäre

John Milton und John Locke zu den Gesten

Zusammenfassung

Die Intention meiner Arbeit ist, einige Elemente in Miltons und Lockes politischen Schriften aufzuweisen, abhängig von ihren Einstellungen zu diversen Medien. Milton hat in seiner Argumentierung gegen die Zensur darzulegen, dass alle historischen Instanzen der Zensur – gewöhnlich zitiert in seinem Jahrhundert – als Beispiele eines anderen Phänomens ausgedeutet werden können. Demgegenüber erkennt Milton, indem er unterschiedliche Loci in Platons Der Staat sowie einigen biblischen Themen analysiert, die Reichweite als auch Gewichtigkeit der nicht-begrifflichen, ungedruckten, nichtverbalen Kommunikationsformen; er schildert sie als Zeichen des kindischen, weiblichen oder ungebildeten Verhaltens, als wertlose Phänomene aus dem Blickwinkel der in der Pressefreiheit verkörperten politischen Libertät. John Lockes Einstellung ist übereinstimmend. Ich erläutere eine Ideenkette, analog zu jener Miltons, in seinen Werken Zwei Abhandlungen über die Regierung und Epistola de tolerantia, indem ich die Analyse auf den Begriff der Adiaphora (der neutralen Dinge) fokussiere.

Schlüsselwörter

Zensur, Oralität, typografisches Zeitalter, Platon über die Zensur, Adiaphora, John Miltons *Areopagica*, John Lockes *Epistola de tolerantia*

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La censure en tant que chimère typographique

John Milton et John Locke à propos des gestes

Résumé

L'objectif de cet article est de mettre en lumière quelques éléments tirés des écrits politiques de John Milton et de John Locke, en fonction de leur attitude à l'égard des différents médias. Dans son argumentation contre la censure, John Milton doit démontrer que toutes les anciennes instances de censure, citées souvent à son époque, peuvent être interprétées comme des exemples d'un autre phénomène. Cependant, John Milton reconnaît, en analysant les lieux communs dans la République de Platon ainsi que dans certains textes bibliques, la portée et la signification des formes non-conceptuelles, non-imprimées, non-verbales de communication ; il les décrit comme des signes d'un comportement enfantin, féminin ou inculte, comme des phénomènes sans importance d'un point de vue de liberté politique incarnée dans la liberté de la presse. La position de John Locke est la même. Je montrerai l'enchaînement des idées, similaire à celui de Milton, dans ses ouvrages Deux traités du gouvernement et Lettre sur la tolérance, en focalisant mon analyse sur le concept d'adiaphora (les choses indifférentes).

Mots-clés

censure, oralité, ère typographique, Platon à propos de la censure, adiaphora, *Areopagica* de John Milton, *Lettre sur la tolérance* de John Locke