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### **Remarks On The Life and Writings Of Dr. Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin**

**Orrery, John Boyle of**

**London, 1752**

Remarks upon the flying island, and the manners, and various projects of  
the philosophers of Lagado.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-49109](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-49109)

AND WRITINGS OF DR. SWIFT. 97

However wild the description of the *flying island*, and the manners, and various projects of the philosophers of *Lagado* may appear, yet it is a real picture embellish'd with much latent wit and humour. It is a fatyr upon those astronomers and mathematicians, who have so entirely dedicated their time to the planets, that they have been careles of their family and country, and have been chiefly anxious, about the œconomy and welfare of the upper worlds. But if we consider SWIFT's romance in a serious light, we shall find him of opinion, that those determinations in philosophy, which at present seem to the most knowing men to be perfectly well founded and understood, are in reality unsettled, or uncertain, and may perhaps some ages hence be as much decried, as the axioms of ARISTOTLE are at this day. SIR ISAAC NEWTON and his notions may hereafter be out of fashion. There is a kind of mode in philosophy, as well as in other things: and such modes often change more from the humour and caprice of men, than either from the unreasonable, or the ill-founded conclusions of the philosophy itself. The reasonings of some philosophers have undoubtedly better foundations than those of others: but I am of opinion (and SWIFT seems to be in the same way of thinking) that the most applauded philosophy hitherto extant has not fully, clearly, and certainly explained many difficulties in the phænomena of nature. I am induc'd to believe, that God may have absolutely denied us the perfect knowledge of many points in phi-

H losophy,

losophy, so that we shall never arrive at that perfection, however certain we may suppose ourselves of having attained to it already. Upon the whole, we may say with TULLY, *Omni bus ferè in rebus, et maximè in physicis quid non sit citius, quam quid sit, dixerim.*

The project for a more easy and expeditious method of writing a treatise in any science, by a wooden engine <sup>a</sup>, is entertainingly satyrical, and is aimed at those authors, who, instead of receiving materials from their own thoughts and observations, collect from dictionaries and common place-books, an irregular variety, without order, use, or design,

*Ut nec pes nec caput uni  
Reddatur formæ.*

The project of shortning a discourse, by cutting polysyllables into one, and leaving out verbs and participles <sup>b</sup>, is pointed at the pernicious custom of contracting the English language, the dialect of which is naturally harsh, and that harshness is still encreased by improper contractions. As SWIFT was scrupulously exact in the pronunciation of his own tongue, not the least improper expression ever escaped his censure: and I remember to have seen in manuscript a dictionary of hard words, composed by him for the use of his female senate.

<sup>a</sup> Page 218.

<sup>b</sup> Page 220.