

THE MORAL AND RATIONAL REQUIREMENTS OF LOCKE'S LIBERALISM

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Locke claims that his moral and political teaching is capable of a fully rational demonstration. It would seem then that Lockean citizens are expected to grasp the rational bases of their regime. But Locke was notoriously vague or incomplete on what the rational demonstration entailed, in matters of theology especially but in others as well. I examine this question in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, the *Two Treatises of Government*, and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, and conclude that

Locke did not expect most citizens to grasp the full philosophical demonstration of liberalism, but would understand a simplified version of it. This, however, risks leaving liberal culture in an unsettled state.

For Locke, morality is or should be a matter of rational deduction. But what does he expect liberal citizens to know? Typically pegged as a pioneer of the Enlightenment, Locke struggled to free us from the metaphysical obscurantism of Scholasticism, and the harmful myths upon which custom has been founded in so many times and places. He strove to replace these with a much more transparent philosophy, the philosophy of liberalism, based on what a later generation was to regard as self-evident truths. Since these truths were meant to supplant the myths of ages past, it would be natural to expect that liberal citizens would have a relatively complete understanding of their public philosophy.

Locke's most familiar statements on the subject suggest just this. In the *Second Treatise of Government* he asserts that the law of nature, which forms the basis of liberalism as he sees it, is "plain and intelligible to all rational Creatures"—as indeed it must be, if it is to be binding.¹ He tells us at the beginning of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that our minds are "very capable" of the knowledge we need to guide our conduct, a point reiterated throughout the book.² Yet pessimistic statements are also scattered through Locke's works. The *Second Treatise of Government* finds that "the greater part" of mankind fails to observe the natural law in the state of nature, due in part to ignorance of it (§§123-4). Locke seems to be almost fond of pointing out that whole societies have gone horribly astray in their understanding of morality (e.g., *Questions*, pp 145-7, 183-99; *Essay*, I.3.9-11; *First Treatise*, §§ 55-59). Perhaps most pessimistically, he says in his late work *The Reasonableness of Christianity* that "the greatest part [of mankind] cannot know, and therefore they must believe" in the fundamental grounds of morality (p. 146). |

Which is it? Can society be put on a footing of knowledge, as the Enlightenment hoped, or must even liberalism rely on tradition and implicit belief, due to the inability of most human beings to grasp rationally the proper principles of morality and politics? At stake is much more than whether intellectual historians properly pigeonhole Locke as an “Enlightenment Thinker.” To the extent that Locke is an architect of our society and our conception of justice, it matters a great deal whether his system has easily accessible foundations, and whether, in his view at least, its health depends on those foundations being widely grasped (*cf.* Ceasar 1990, 19-25, 40). At least some of the above quotes indicate Locke thought it quite important that citizens understand the rational basis of their morality. Is liberal society then in jeopardy if its philosophic underpinnings are not widely understood, or are misunderstood? Exactly what understanding of liberal principles is the liberal citizen to have, and how much of the philosophy behind them is he to grasp? In other words, what knowledge does Locke believe must be disseminated in order for liberal society to function properly?

I propose to examine this cluster of questions as examined in several of Locke’s works, principally the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, which lays out Locke’s philosophical claims in their most thorough form, and the more practical works the *Two Treatises of Government* and *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. My theme, like the theme of most of these works, is not political in the narrow sense. We will not be looking at the knowledge required for such things as political consent or participation, or vigilance against tyranny. These are clearly important, but more fundamental is knowledge of the grounding principles of liberal morality. Regarding this type of knowledge, I believe we will find that Locke is not the Enlightenment figure some take him to be—he is too pessimistic about the average man’s capacity or his devotion to the duty of under-

standing, and has too great a sense of the difficulties of moral philosophy. But he does envision a society, and an ethics, rooted in a few moral principles that can be widely understood. These principles are grounded in the simple postulate of equity, the moral consequence of equality.

THE *ESSAY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING*

Our question is important partly because for Locke, morality is fundamentally a question of knowledge. The uncompromising teaching of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is that proper morality is a consequence of proper understanding. Aristotle may have emphasized the role of habituation in morality (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1103a14-1103b25), but Locke puts knowledge in complete control of the will. Locke is aware that habit and improperly-schooled appetite may thwart one's knowledge of moral propriety, but he places responsibility for properly forming, or re-forming, habit and appetite squarely on the shoulders of each individual's intellect.³

But what is the content of the knowledge that makes us moral, that allows us to form our habits aright? The *Essay* opens with an extended argument that no part of it is innate (I.2-4; "Epistle to the Reader," xvii). This argument was controversial in Locke's day, because innate ideas were widely supposed to be the source of morality; in the form of conscience or direct moral intuition, they were held to provide us with a natural (or supernatural) moral compass.⁴ Innate ideas would be a sure, and seemingly effortless, path to moral knowledge, were we possessed of them. Locke however had rejected innate moral ideas as early as his *Questions Concerning the Law of Nature*.⁵ Human disagreement regarding morality is too endemic (this is where Locke instances societies that have gone horribly astray), and the doctrine of innate ideas had degenerated into jargon-laden dogma in the universities of Locke's day (*Essay* III.6, IV.2, 6). In the place

of innate moral ideas, Locke claims that morality is or can become a “demonstrative” science, comparable to mathematics (III.11.16; IV.3.18, 20; IV.4.7; IV.12.8). Moral knowledge consists of certain deductions from certain premises. It requires a mental effort of discovery.

What we need to know are the premises of this demonstration, and the moral principles they yield. We may think we have a fairly good view of the outlines of Locke’s moral teaching, from his political works especially. But the fact is that neither in the *Essay* nor in any other work did he produce the philosophic demonstration of which he speaks.⁶ He never produced a systematic list of its conclusions—the precepts of morality or natural law—as Hobbes for example had done.⁷ As to its premises, we are almost equally in the dark. Some things about them are abundantly clear. According to the *Essay*, the basis of morality is the rational “pursuit of happiness” (II.21.50, 52, 59, 60; IV.21.3; Myers 1998, 49). The law of nature then is the path to happiness (*Questions*, pp. 153, 197). Indeed, it would have to be: happiness according to Locke is the only conceivable motive not only of human nature, but of any rational nature.⁸ Further, this happiness is reducible to pleasure (II.21.42, 55, 62). In essence, according to Locke, morality can only be expected of rational creatures if it brings them pleasure—their own personal pleasure (II.27.18).

If our moral demonstration is only an elucidation of the path to pleasure, it would seem that very few will have difficulty either discovering, or following, it. But there is a catch. The pursuit of happiness aligns with morality only when tethered to a rational view of true, as opposed to chimerical, happiness. “The highest perfection of intellectual nature lies in a careful and constant pursuit of true and solid happiness,” writes Locke—but only if we take due care “that we mistake not imaginary for real happiness” (II.21.51; *cf.*

II.20.2; II.21.52, 56, 60). Untutored appetite, far from leading to morality and true happiness, is the greatest obstacle to it.⁹ In fact, our true duty is to suspend desire until we have deliberated properly upon real happiness, and determined which path will most likely take us there (II.21.47-53, 67; *Thoughts* §33). Intrinsic to the moral deduction Locke wishes us to perform then is a rational vision of human happiness. But now Locke's guidance becomes vague again. Aristotle too made true or rational happiness the touchstone for morality (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1097b22-1098a20), but Locke follows Aristotle's lead partially at best. He sounds more like Hobbes when he endorses the variability of human desire or taste. Individuals get happiness in varying and idiosyncratic ways; these differing appetites lead to different views of happiness, and hence of good and evil (I.3.6, II.21.42, 54-5).

Hence it was, I think, that the philosophers of old did in vain inquire, whether *summum bonum* consisted in riches or bodily delights, or virtue, or contemplation? And they might have as reasonably disputed, whether the best relish were to be found in apples, plums, or nuts; and have divided themselves into sects upon it. For as pleasant tastes depend not on the things themselves, but their agreeableness to this or that palate, wherein there is great variety; so the greatest happiness consists in the having those things which produce the greatest pleasure, and in the absence of those which cause any disturbance, any pain. Now, these to different men are very different things (II.21.55).

This may disqualify Locke from being a Peripatetic, but we should be wary of making him a relativist. Though some may prefer apples to nuts, none is seen to relish hemlock: nature still sets a limit to the range of tastes (I.3.3, II.10.3). Similarly, Locke elsewhere

excludes certain “tastes” as true or legitimate paths to happiness, and thus as morally acceptable. Such vices as drunkenness and profligacy, though driven no doubt by certain views of happiness, are not eligible paths to it, as a due consideration would infallibly establish (II.21.35, II.32.17). Those who indulge in such vices do not simply follow idiosyncratic taste, but violate “the eternal law and nature of things” (II.21.56). They should have conformed their taste to “the true intrinsic good or ill that is in things” (II.21.53; cf. 69, IV.4.9).

Once again, the ball is in our court. It is our responsibility to develop the knowledge that produces moral action, based on a view of happiness that is latitudinarian though not relativistic. But what exactly is this view? Unfortunately, aside from such obviously self-destructive vices as drunkenness, and such obvious virtues as self-control or rationality, Locke gives little idea in the *Essay* of the proper or improper interpretations of happiness. Perhaps he hopes to avoid the controversy that a novel moral teaching would bring, by speaking only vaguely of “virtue,” “duty,” and “rational self-mastery,” without further specification. But whatever his motive, his reticence makes our task more difficult. What view of happiness is the correct one, and what is the morality that serves it? Evidently not those of Aristotle; but how not, and why not? We might, like Aristotle, approach this question through the concept of human nature. As Locke says elsewhere, our true happiness is manifestly the happiness that best suits our nature (*Questions*, p. 169; cf. *RC*, p. 112). In the *Essay*, Locke even specifies the concept of human nature that must underlie moral demonstration, or at least the characteristic of man that makes him subject to moral law: man as a “corporeal, rational Creature” (III.11.16; cf. II.27, IV.3.18). This is richly suggestive, but Locke remains virtually silent on how we are to use this concept to derive morality.

In the end, the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, which lays the foundation of Locke's moral philosophy, leaves us with a curiously incomplete picture of the details of morality, and of the intellectual avenue to its discovery (*cf.* Horwitz 1990, 26; Myers 1998, 232, 248). More than one of Locke's correspondents urged him to flesh out the scant moral teaching of the work, to which Locke was wont to reply that the *Essay's* purpose was to show how our ideas are gotten, not what those ideas are or should be.¹⁰ More pertinently, he confessed that he did not know if he was capable of bringing his "demonstrative morality" to fruition (*Correspondence* IV: 524; *cf.* 111-12, 786-7). Clearly, it concerns us to know why. Locke's doubts seem to have centered in part around the problem of theology.

RELIGION AND MORALITY

The most complete synopsis that Locke provides in the *Essay* of his intended moral demonstration lays it out in this fashion:

The idea of a Supreme Being, infinite in power, goodness, and wisdom, whose workmanship we are, and on whom we depend; and the idea of ourselves, as understanding, rational beings, being such as are clear in us, would, I suppose, if duly considered and pursued, afford such foundations of our duty and rules of action as might place morality amongst the sciences capable of demonstration (IV.3.18; *cf. Questions*, p. 133)

Aside from the remarkably tentative tone of this passage, the most striking thing about it is its dependence on God. Throughout the *Essay*, Locke insists that morality depends on a divine legislator and enforcer, and that virtue must be grounded in a belief in divine rewards and punishments. To cite just two of these, he says that the "true ground of morality" can only be "the will and law of a God, who sees men in the dark, has in his

hand rewards and punishments” (I.3.6); and that these rewards and punishments must consist of “some good and evil that is not the natural product and consequence of the action itself” (II.28.6; *cf.* I.3.12-13, II.28.4-5). This is a position Locke reiterated in a variety of works, public and private, over the course of his whole career.¹¹ For Locke, natural law is a species of divine law.

Locke had his reasons for resting morality on a theological foundation. First is the principle, stated in the *Essay*, that morality must bring us happiness in order for it to be our rational duty. As moralists have always acknowledged, moral action sometimes infringes upon individual happiness in this life. Liberal morality minimizes the demands on us, but it does not eliminate the problem entirely. Divine reward and punishment are still necessary to bring morality and happiness fully into alignment (*cf.* *Essay* I.3.13). In the second place, Locke adopts the philosophical position that morality can exist only by command, by a legislating will. In taking this view, Locke consciously positions himself against others, from the classical philosophers, to Hugo Grotius, to his own contemporaries the “Cambridge Platonists,” who understood the moral law to be intrinsic to nature.¹² This philosophical choice may have been a consequence of Locke’s devotion to science as he understood it. To many of the pioneers of modern natural science, mechanistic and non-teleological nature required direction from outside. Morality in particular could exist only by being imposed from outside of nature, by supernature.¹³ This is the position Locke adopts. It accounts not only for Locke’s insistence on finding a supernatural legislating will, but his concern to rebut “materialism,” the view that there is no spiritual substance, as a doctrine fatal to morality (*Essay* II.23, IV.3.6, IV.10, IV.12.4; *Thoughts* §192).

Under these circumstances, knowledge is still the key to morality, but knowledge of seemingly a very different sort. We must now establish the existence of god—of a providential, rewarding and punishing god—and determine his will, to know where morality and happiness reside. Moreover, in order for morality to be grounded in reason in the way Locke says it is, we cannot rely on revelation for these points. We must develop a rational or natural theology. Many of Locke’s statements regarding the knowledge we require for morality do center on just these theological points (v. *Questions*, 159; *Conduct*, 342, 354, 360; and the passage from the *Essay* at the head of this section). In the passage where Locke rejects the classical *summum bonum*, he appears to assert that divine mandate is the only thing rescuing us from relativism (II.21.54-5). Yet Locke never produced the requisite theological proof, and explicitly acknowledged the fact, to friendly critics, at least.¹⁴ This is one reason, perhaps the chief reason, why Locke’s “demonstrative morality” remained incomplete. Clearly, this presents a problem for our inquiry: If even the philosopher fails to provide the rational theology morality requires, morality itself would appear to fail, or at least fail of the basis in knowledge that we seek.

This problem has led some to argue that Locke’s claims regarding theology are only a rhetorical cover for a non-theistic teaching (Strauss 1953, 212-14; Pangle 1988, 201-3; Rabieh 1991, 95), and others to conclude that Locke ultimately retreated to revelation to shore up his moral project (Dunn 1984, 68, 1969, 187-8; Marshall 1994, 322, 388, 441, 453; Waldron 2002, 103-5). For the reasons given above, I believe Locke’s theological claims to be more than rhetoric. As to his alleged retreat into revelation, it is premised largely on the late work, *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. This work does appear to endorse revelation at the expense of reason and natural religion. We must remember however that Locke continued to issue revised editions of the *Essay*

Concerning Human Understanding during the same period that *The Reasonableness of Christianity* was published, replete with strong statements favoring rationally-derived theology (*Essay* III.9.23; IV.19.4, 14; IV.17.24, IV.18). Over an even longer term, he proceeded to develop his moral philosophy, accompanied by a rational or natural theology, despite the lack of a full theological proof. In short, Locke did not behave as though the lack of this proof stymied his overall moral project (Waldron 2002, 96-7).

Clearly, Locke would have preferred a flawless, “demonstrative,” proof of his God’s existence. But perhaps we should credit him when he suggests that the strong *probability* of a providential God, short of demonstrative proof, suffices for purposes of our conduct (*Essay* II.21.70, IV.14.2, IV.17.23; *Correspondence* IV, p. 110). Indeed, his repeated claim in the *Essay* is that probability is all we have to guide us in “the greatest part of our concernment,” that is, the affairs of life (IV.14.2; *cf.* I.1.5, IV.3.6, IV.12.10, IV.18.2). Here again, Locke’s statements need to be understood in the context of his devotion to the new science. Earlier centuries—and overly enthusiastic moderns, like Descartes—might have aspired to certain knowledge, but an honest empiricism had to confess its limits (Myers 1998, 10; Schouls 1992, 5, 13-14; Marshall 1994, 137). The emerging scientific movement had by Locke’s time largely reconciled itself to the view that our knowledge of the workings of nature can be no more than probabilistic, a view that Locke endorses (*Essay* II.31.9, IV.2.14; IV.3.14, IV.6.16, IV.12.10; Shapiro 1983, Chs 1-2). It was widely accepted by seventeenth-century science that our grasp of many things, including quite possibly religion, could attain to “moral certainty,” but were not susceptible to absolute proof (Shapiro 1983, Chs 1-2). If science could attain to no more than a high degree of probability in its grasp of the workings of nature, that may suffice for theology as well. In science and in life, a sufficiently high degree of probability could

reasonably qualify as “knowledge” (v. *Essay* I.1.4, 5; II.21.70; IV.11.3; IV.14, 15, 16, 18).

Whatever the reason, the lack of demonstrative proof for a providential God did not deter Locke from producing a fairly robust natural theology over the course of his career. There is the sketch from the *Essay* quoted at the head of this section, one of many passages in that work touching on natural theology. There are sometimes extensive sallies into natural theology in *Questions Concerning the Law of Nature* (question V *et passim*), *Ethics* (pp. 311-12), the *Two Treatises of Government*, and even *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (pp. 13, 133, 142, 147, 149). But the most systematic foray into natural theology, and the one that seems best to epitomize Locke’s approach to the subject, is that of the *First Treatise of Government*.

The theology of the *First Treatise* begins with the twin premises that God placed in man “a strong desire of Self-preservation,” and that he “furnished the World with things fit for Food and Rayment and other Necessaries of Life” (§86). From these facts, according to Locke, we can infer a divine directive: “God, I say, having made Man and World thus, spoke to him, (that is) directed him by his Senses and Reason...to the use of those things, which were serviceable for his Subsistence” (*id.*). In sum, “Reason, *which was the voice of God in him,*” taught man that in following the inclination to self-preservation he followed God’s will (*id.*; cf. *Essay* IV.19.4). Our reason tells us that we do God’s will when we follow our strongest appetites and provide for ourselves in this world—when we pursue our happiness rationally. We may have no innate ideas of good and evil, but reason can properly draw moral-theological conclusions from the situation in which we are placed in this world.

Scripture, when Locke cites it in these contexts, becomes a mere echo to the rational teaching (e.g., *First Treatise* §§41, 86, *Second Treatise* §§25, 31). The Scriptural charge to “be fruitful and multiply” (*Genesis* 1:28) is interpreted by Locke as a simple statement of God’s intention that mankind prosper materially. For, according to Locke, this principle “contains in it the improvement too of Arts and Sciences, and the conveniences of Life” (*First Treatise*, §33). It is scarce an exaggeration to say that the whole theology of the *Two Treatises* (indeed the *Treatises*’ moral teaching in general) is an extended gloss on “be fruitful and multiply,” thus understood. This principle tells us, among other things, of our right to property, to all “the Food and Rayment, and other Conveniencies of Life” we can extract from nature (*First Treatise* §41; cf. *Second Treatise* §§25-6). Not only our desire for preservation, but our appetites for comfort and convenience, are in effect divine directives. Reflecting on these, we conclude according to the *First Treatise* that God confers a universal right to preservation on individuals, and makes the prosperity and happiness of the human race the fulcrum of morality.

Proceeding in this way, of course, virtually guarantees that theology and liberal morality will always be in concord. We should note however that some suppositions are required for this to work as theology. First and foremost, perhaps, is that reason is God’s voice, and an inerrant source of guidance, if used properly. Locke implicitly rejects the view of some theologians that human reason is sufficiently clouded by original sin that we must rely on grace or inspiration for proper understanding (Shapiro 1983, 76, 83; Marshall 1994, 127, 194; Shouls 1992, 194; Zuckert 1996, 158). Conversely, there can be nothing ineffable about God’s will, or his plan for mankind; it is accessible through mundane, even pedestrian, reasoning (cf. *Essay* IV.18, 19; *Reasonableness*, p. 119; Pangle 2003, Ch. 2). Further, not only our reason but our nature as a whole must be

largely free from the corruption of original sin; otherwise, our appetites could hardly be a guide to God's design (Strauss 1953, 216; Dunn 1969, 23; Marshall 1994, 193-202; Myers 1998, 187-8). Finally, the rational pursuit of happiness in this life must also be the path to happiness in the next. Locke's God is not the God of Puritan asceticism but of liberalism: His moral law directs us to happiness and prosperity in this world. As the *Essay* told us, happiness is our motive; Locke's God acknowledges this and makes use of it. Indeed, he put the desire of happiness in us precisely to be our guide (*First Treatise* §86; *Essay* II.7.3-4, II.21.34, IV.19.4, 13; cf. *Questions*, pp. 101, 167; Dunn 1969, 258; Aarslef 1969, 111, 114, 126; Grant 1987, 25; Marshall 1994, 188).

Locke adhered to these theological principles throughout his life, however bold they might seem in the face of various Christian orthodoxies.¹⁵ For indeed, they follow the script of his philosophical empiricism flawlessly. That empiricism, as laid out in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, entails that the mind derives all its ideas, including moral ideas, by rational deduction from concepts rooted in sense perception. The *First Treatise* merely shows how to apply this procedure to theological reasoning. Yet, paradoxically, this mode of proceeding renders theology as a distinct science almost superfluous. We discover god's will in the same way we discover the general rules of morality, by empirical reasoning. Divine legislation and enforcement may be crucial to morality—natural law and divine law may be one—but their content is discovered by a purely empirical reflection upon the prerequisites of our happiness. Natural/divine law is little more than the principle of human happiness, conceived as divinely ordained and commanded—"be fruitful and multiply," liberally understood. The only knowledge we need in order to discern God's plan is knowledge of the natures we are endowed with, and of the position we occupy in the world.¹⁶

For that reason, however, the theological line of thought does not advance our inquiry very far. The knowledge Locke expects of us is theological in one sense, but it ultimately resolves into rational knowledge of human happiness. And for this, we must reason about man and his experience, not *ab initio* about God, or Scripture. When Locke speaks of a duty all men have to investigate theology as the lynchpin of morality,¹⁷ he means not the rational demonstration of the existence of God, which he himself did not provide, but the type of theology depicted above, which he did. Proper theological notions are important to Locke's citizens partly because religious misconceptions are a potent source of false moral teachings. Lockean citizens must indeed learn that reason repudiates the absolutist God of Robert Filmer, the intolerant God of many of Locke's compatriots, and the austere deity of the severest Christian sects. Locke's theology performs the vital service of cementing, indeed *sanctifying*, a proper understanding of human happiness. But it rather presupposes that view than discovering it. We may come closer to a proof of this view of happiness, and thus to Locke's "demonstrative morality," in more practical works like the *Second Treatise of Government*.

THE SECOND TREATISE OF GOVERNMENT

The opening of the *Second Treatise* appears to give us the very thing we have been looking for—a rational derivation of morality or natural law. Moreover, the derivation seems to be remarkably easy. Chapter Two of that work presents us with what appear to be three parallel derivations of the natural law. First, "Reason, which is that law, teaches all Mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his Life, Health, Liberty, or Possessions" (§6). There follows a theological argument based on god as creator and master: we are not to abuse god's handiwork. The third argument, like the first, relies on natural equality: creatures with

similar faculties cannot be supposed to have any subordination among them as would allow any to “destroy” another (*id.*). All these lines of thought lead to the conclusion that we are bound by one fundamental principle of natural law: “Every one as he is *bound to preserve himself*, and not to quit his station wilfully; so by the like reason when his own Preservation comes not in competition, ought he, as much as he can, *to preserve the rest of Mankind...*”(*id.*).

The central derivation, based on divine ownership, clearly resonates with Locke’s theological concerns. But it is not overtly relied on in the rest of the *Second Treatise*, and indeed seems at odds with the postulate of human self-ownership on which Locke’s pivotal doctrine of property rests (*Second Treatise*, §27). A number of ways of resolving the apparent tension between divine ownership and human self-ownership have been proposed (Myers 1998, 50, 248; Waldron 2002, 79; Zuckert 1994, 242, 264, 276, 287; 1996, 179), but the interpretation of Lockean theology proposed above suggests a relatively simple resolution: Divine ownership of man—and of nature—is necessary to support God’s authority to impose morality on the whole; but what God decrees, as reason teaches us, is human self-ownership (and ownership of nature), for all practical worldly purposes (§§25-7).

The other two derivations of natural law at the opening of the *Second Treatise* (and indeed the theological one as well) rest on a single, simple syllogism: from the fact of equality, we conclude that we are to respect the rights of others. This appears to fulfill the requirement for “demonstrative morality” envisaged by the *Essay*: reason discovers a moral principle on the basis of ideas drawn ultimately from sense experience. Fact becomes value: from the material fact of *equality* we derive the moral rule of *equity*, equal treatment (*cf.* Zuckert 2002a, 178, 194). It may be, as suggested in the previous

section, that the theological background is necessary to make the material fact a “moral fact” (*cf.* Budziszewski 1986, 24-5, 43-4; Olivecrona 1974, 219; Tully 1991, xvii). But the logic itself, as presented by Locke, is purely rational. It is easily grasped, without being innate. Natural law thus understood is indeed, as Locke says, nothing more than “*reason and common Equity*” (§8), almost a kind of moral common sense. This common sense is so basic according to Locke, so central to our humanity, that no one can renounce it without sinking to the level of the beasts (§§8, 10, 11, 163, 172).

The case of property is illustrative. Do we not all understand immediately that the fruit I have picked in the state of nature becomes mine by the act of picking—that while anyone might have picked it before me, it is unjust to take it from me once I have gathered it?¹⁸ Surely we do, which confirms Locke’s assertion that the natural law is “intelligible and plain” to all who consult reason (§12; *cf.* §§6, 124. *Essay* IV.4.9). The law is made easier still by the minimal demands it makes on us. Though the natural law charges each of us to “*preserve the rest of Mankind*” as far as possible (§6), Locke conspicuously refrains from interpreting this as any kind of charitable duty. Our first duty is to ourselves, and we are to care for the collective preservation only when our own “comes not in competition.” Even when it does not, the duty to preserve mankind is limited to a duty not to harm others. All three derivations of natural law, even the theological one, agree on this strikingly minimalist outcome (*id.*).¹⁹

Is this then the answer for which we have been looking? Is this natural law what Locke expects us to know, in order to be good citizens and responsible moral agents? It is syllogistic, easy to understand, and undemanding. But there are problems, indicated first by the fact that the law fails in the natural state, rather spectacularly so, as “the greater part” of mankind prove to be “no strict Observers of Equity and Justice” (§123). It

concerns us to know the reasons for this failure, and in particular whether it is related to the law's cognitive demands. This turns out to be at least partly the case. First, though it is limited to a "no harm" principle, Locke's natural law is more demanding than was Hobbes's, for example. In Hobbes's state of nature, every man had a right to every thing, so that there was no duty to respect another's right (*Leviathan*, Ch 14). For Locke, there is a duty to respect others' "Life, Health, Liberty, [and] Possessions," even outside society (§6). Though I may prefer my preservation when it is threatened, equity at other times forbids me from violating others' rights to benefit myself. What I learn when I consult reason is that others have as much right as I, which I am bound to respect.

This is where the cognitive failure comes in—though not in the manner we might expect. In the one place where he systematically discusses the defects of the state of nature, Locke says the law of nature may be "plain and intelligible to all rational Creatures; yet Men being biassed by their Interest, as well as ignorant for want of study of it, are not apt to allow of it as a Law binding to them in the application of it to their particular Cases" (§124; *cf.* §13). If we mark Locke's precise words, it is not that men in the state of nature fail to grasp the content of the natural law *per se*; rather, they fail to acknowledge its applicability to their own cases. In this way, the basic principle of equity could be moral common sense, but fail of its effect nonetheless. Men might recognize breaches of equity in others, for example, but fail to apply it fairly, or perhaps even to recognize it, in their own cases. It seems that their "lack of study" amounts to a lack of reflection on the *reciprocity* demanded by the law, more than a failure to grasp its fundamental principle. We might say that they fail to take the law to heart, though this is presented by Locke squarely as a failure of rationality.

Following this line of thought, we could almost say that men in the state of nature both know and do not know the fundamental law of morality. In the *Essay*, Locke argued that morality was essentially a matter of knowledge—to know the good is to do the good. Yet moral knowledge might fail to produce moral behavior if incomplete in the manner just suggested. The natural law could then be easily known in a sense, even widely recognized in the state of nature, and still widely violated there. Locke says in another context that government remedies this situation partly by providing a means by which those who “mis-cite, or misapply” the law may “be convinced of their mistake” (§136). In this case, civil law seems as much a vehicle for instruction as chastisement. A man may grasp the basic principle of equity, yet fail to rise to the objective or third-party perspective that reason as equity requires. Men easily, nay greedily, accept the liberal postulate that their right constitutes the heart of morality; the demand that they recognize the same in others is less welcome. For Locke, the resulting moral failure is a failure of understanding.

Property once again illustrates the point. The natural law of property in Chapter Five of the *Second Treatise* is relatively undemanding. It requires only that we not harm others; neither charity nor any kind of duty to share with the needy appears to have any place in it.²⁰ Yet, says Locke, a fundamental divide opened up in the state of nature itself between those who obeyed the command to respect property, and those who did not. The former, as Locke famously says, were “Industrious and Rational,” the latter “Quarrelsome and Contentious” (§34). Industry, the accumulation of property by labor, and respect for the property of others—these represent the rational, and hence moral, response to the situation we are placed in by nature. If the fundamental principle of morality is the preservation of all mankind, the Industrious and Rational serve it first by providing for themselves, then by respecting the property of others. Or rather, they are *able* to respect

others' property because they accumulate their own. Under the natural condition of unprovidedness that Locke describes, respect for others' rights requires providing for oneself. In this way the natural law of the *Second Treatise*, though a mere principle of no harm, does impose a rather stringent discipline. It provides for the general preservation by charging each individual with his own care, and demanding equity. The law of nature is the law of industrious self-reliance, not only out of self-interest, but out of a duty to respect others.

This would help explain why the knowledge required for morality might fail despite being almost self-evident: sloth and self-interest get in its way. But this only masks a deeper problem with the account of moral knowledge in the *Second Treatise*. We might ask the simple question, Why should an individual be equitable? Why respect others' property when it is advantageous to steal instead? The question is not impertinent; it is inspired by the treatment of the moral law in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. According to the argument of the *Essay*, as we recall, rational individuals are motivated by their own happiness exclusively (*Essay* II.21.33, 41, 52, 62). Moral behavior was depicted as the path to personal happiness (IV.21.3; I.21.46-60; II.27.18); equity or respect for others was not a theme. By contrast, equity is the heart of morality in the *Second Treatise*, and the true or rational understanding of individual happiness is a secondary theme at best. This is partly a consequence of the different aspects of morality emphasized in each work. The *Essay* focused more on the self-regarding virtues of rational discipline, while the *Second Treatise of Government* is more concerned with social and political morality. Needless to say, it is easier to connect morality to personal happiness in the case of the self-regarding virtues.

Put in the terms of our question, these two works seem to demand different sorts of knowledge as the heart of morality. The *Essay* assigns us the duty of developing a rational understanding of personal happiness, while the *Second Treatise* requires an understanding of the rational demands of equity. It is by no means clear that these are the same, or even that they are fully compatible. Equity, even as minimally as the *Second Treatise* construes it, might conflict with the individual's pursuit of happiness defined as pleasure. On the understanding of the *Essay*, this would make it irrational. Put another way, the *Second Treatise* never fully explains why rational individuals, as depicted in the *Essay*, should obey natural law. The knowledge they need is knowledge of how respecting the rights of others serves their personal happiness.

However vague the *Essay* may have been on happiness *per se*, it did provide an infallible link, through divine enforcement of natural law. The *Second Treatise* gives barely a hint of this. God is sometimes identified as the source of natural law, but more often the law and its grounding are spoken of without him (compare §§8, 135 with §§6, 7, 16, 63, 124-8; cf. Strauss 1953, 214, 223). In his discussion of the enforcement of natural law, Locke does not so much as mention the possibility of divine enforcement.²¹ The *First Treatise* provides a theology that dovetails with the *Second Treatise*, but it is equally silent on the otherworldly rewards and punishments that the *Essay* asserts to be necessary to bring morality in line with individual happiness. Its centerpiece is the notion that our desires for preservation and comfort are divine endowments (§§86-8). But the *First Treatise* does not make clear how this could be the foundation of a duty to preserve all mankind, even in the minimal sense of the *Second Treatise*. The result is that in the *Two Treatises*, natural law remains partially unsupported, only imperfectly linked to the happiness of each, and thus to the moral anchor of the *Essay*.

For this reason, it appears that the *Second Treatise* does not fully embody the knowledge Locke expected liberal citizenship to rest on. The *Second Treatise* centers morality on the other-regarding virtue of equity, without fully explaining how knowledge will make us equitable. It makes a good enough case for the overlap between the common and individual goods, but this does not provide the guarantee of individual happiness that the *Essay* promises, and requires, for morality. The account provided by the *Second Treatise* is almost Kantian: we are to respect others because reason-as-equity demands it. But Locke the individualist and hedonist cannot be a Kantian; his moral law needs motivation in personal happiness and even pleasure.²² For this, a likely place to look is Locke's educational work, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. Like the *Second Treatise*, this work is highly practical, but its focus is on morality at the individual, not the social, level. It cannot avoid addressing the moral motivation of the individual, and the knowledge on which it is based.

SOME THOUGHTS CONCERNING EDUCATION

Some Thoughts Concerning Education initially seems to make the problem of moral motivation worse rather than better. Echoing the *Second Treatise*, it maintains that "the preservation of all mankind, as much as in him lies...is everyone's duty, and the true principle to regulate our religion, politics, and morality by" (§116). But while the *Second Treatise* drew from this a mere principle of no harm, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* teaches a more benevolent or charitable morality.²³ The work's moral education culminates in a trait or collection of traits called *good breeding*, whose basis is an active concern for the well-being of others. All the while, it accepts the fundamental postulate that happiness or pleasure is the motive of human action (§§54, 115, 143). It solves the

problem of moral motivation by identifying the life of sociable virtue as the happy life. And it does so with remarkably little reliance on theology.

Some Thoughts Concerning Education strongly echoes *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* that morality is the result of reasoning, and even that reason is the highest perfection of human nature (§§61, 81, 110, 122). Locke's education is indeed geared toward the development of the child's rationality—but what will his reason teach him? One important set of lessons is revealed in the work's treatment of justice and property (§110). Children begin with no notion of justice (there being no innate ideas). An understanding of the “just measures of right and wrong,” Locke asserts, comes only with “improved reason and serious meditation” (*id.*). Yet, Locke warns, natural self-love may make them rapacious before justice comes within their mental grasp. This dilemma dogs Lockean moral education: self-love is an innate principle of action, but the moral restraints on it, in particular equitable treatment of others, must be learned (*Thoughts* §§33, 45, 200; *Essay* I.3.13). Regarding justice, Locke's language becomes almost Biblical: “Covetousness, and the desire of having in our possession and under our dominion more than we have need of, being the root of all evil, should be early and carefully weeded out” (*id.*). Locke proposes doing this by teaching not justice, but liberality. Parents initially induce a “readiness to impart to others” (*id.*) by making sure the child always gains materially by it. The goal is not to make him mercenary. Rather, Locke intends the child ultimately to develop genuine “good nature,” whereby he may “take pleasure...in being kind, liberal, and civil, to others” (*id.*).

Against the backdrop of the *Second Treatise*, it is striking both that Locke takes so censorious a view of the desire for possessions, and that he chooses to teach liberality as the antidote to it. The reason is not simply the intellectual inaccessibility of justice;

liberality suits the more socially benevolent, even charitable, approach to virtue Locke takes in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. Justice, as respect for the possessions of others, may be identified with the minimal or “no harm” interpretation of Locke’s basic moral principle. Liberality, on the other hand, is a more expansive virtue—concern for the “preservation of mankind” as active service to others. It is clear that Locke wants his pupil to have liberality as well as justice, that he believes a proper moral education includes both.²⁴

This is well and good, but what we need to know is the rational basis of this more generous understanding of justice, and how it can be squared with Locke’s wider theory of human motivation. In the *Second Treatise*, we recall, morality was grounded in knowledge of natural equality, transformed into the moral precept of equity. The same logic is visible in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*. Locke is very keen to develop a proper appreciation of equality in his pupil. To begin with, the love of dominion, “the first original of most vicious habits that are ordinary and natural,” must be very carefully forestalled (§103). If not, social rank and wealth will conspire to produce a host of vices in the privileged pupil. Locke takes great care to inculcate the principle of human equality in the face of social hierarchy. The presence of household servants, for example, provides a constant temptation to domineering (§§104, 117). All the more essential is it therefore that the child not be allowed to “lose the consideration of human nature in the shufflings of outward conditions” (§117). Accustoming him to civil treatment of “inferiors and the meaner sort of people,” says Locke, is by itself a way of instilling “sentiments of humanity” into the child (*id.*). These sentiments are Locke’s true goal. He discourages cruelty to animals on the same grounds: it leads too easily to cruelty to one’s fellow human beings. It is in this context that Locke makes the expansive pronouncement

that “the preservation of all mankind” should be “everyone’s persuasion, as indeed it is everyone’s duty” (§116).

Locke’s moral education bends every effort to instill the belief—or knowledge, rather—that human beings are equal. His procedure suggests, moreover, that once this knowledge is well seated, it will mature naturally into the moral principle of equity. It suggests that anyone who grasps the fundamental principle of equality will draw the proper moral conclusions—will accord respect to others, will abhor and abstain from treating others unjustly. This accords with the *Second Treatise*, where equality became equity almost by elision, and where it was implied that those who defy the law of nature have simply not taken the principle of equality sufficiently to heart.

In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, the moral principle of equality matures into the virtue of civility (§117). In keeping with the difference between this work and the *Second Treatise*, civility in the educational treatise is not merely an ethic of “no harm,” but a “respect and good will to all people” (§67; cf. §143, Tarcov 1984, 195), a “sweetness of mind” (§66), even a “compassionate and gentle” attitude toward others (§117). One of its expressions, clearly, is the spirit of liberality that Locke wove into his pupil’s view of property. As in the case of liberality, Locke is adamant that this attitude must be sincere and not calculating. “Affectation” is to be avoided at all costs (§§66, 143). Locke’s moral education seeks to form an individual imbued with a “general good will and regard for all people,” an “internal civility of the mind” (§143)—an actively benevolent social creature.²⁵

Locke’s repeated emphasis that true social virtue stems from a sincere regard for others distances him from the Hobbesian argument that civility or complaisance is grounded in the narrowest kind of self-concern (*e.g.*, *Leviathan* Chs. 14-15; cf. Tarcov

1984, 138-40, 142, 210), as it takes him beyond the essentially negative interpretation of moral duty that dominated the *Second Treatise*. But, once again, this only makes our question more urgent. Knowledge of human equality may instruct our pupil in his social duties, but what knowledge will *motivate* him? It was difficult enough to envisage in the *Second Treatise* how knowledge of equality might induce the degree of self-sacrifice implied in the “no harm” principle. The more active benevolence of civility must be motivated by knowledge that it serves the individual’s own happiness. Only thus can it be rational, by the terms of the *Essay*, or indeed of *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*.

Locke prescribes certain studies for his pupil’s edification. The child is instructed in religion, much along the lines of the *First Treatise*, and reads (judiciously) from the Bible for instruction in “morality” (§§136, 159, 185). Similarly, he pursues some philosophical study in “ethics” (Cicero, Grotius, Pufendorf, §§185-6). Locke is rather vague on what moral understanding the child is to draw from these divergent texts. But that question is rendered moot perhaps by Locke’s insistence that the child’s moral understanding comes principally from the “knowledge of *virtue*” he has attained “more by practice than rules” (§185). In the case of the other-regarding virtues, this knowledge begins with an ingenuous acknowledgment of human equality, and its moral consequences.²⁶ But bare knowledge of equality is not enough to motivate a sincere concern and active benevolence for others, that is, to link them with personal happiness and pleasure. Divine rewards would do so, but they are enlisted very sparingly in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, and divine punishments not at all (§61). Good reputation and the admiration of others also link morality to personal happiness, and Locke relies on these much more heavily (e.g., §§56, 61, 110, 185). But most important, judging from its place in Locke’s moral education, is the pleasure Locke believes a properly

formed human being takes simply from serving and gratifying others. This is a note he sounds at every important juncture where other-regarding virtues like liberality and civility are his theme.

His discussion of “good breeding” is the culmination. Good breeding—essentially civility, expressed through the manners conventional to a given time and place (§143)—represents the summit and completion of Locke’s moral education. “Breeding” is something added to virtue, or a graceful way of expressing virtue in society, and its importance to Locke’s education comes precisely from the fact that it facilitates the taking of pleasure from social intercourse. As Locke strikingly confesses, the virtues themselves can bring more pain than pleasure to their possessor without the social “gloss” that good breeding provides (§93). And, as we are now very aware, “Power and riches, nay virtue itself, are valued only as conducing to our happiness” (§143). Breeding links virtue and happiness by being the art of deriving happiness from bringing happiness to others (§§143-5). Locke’s pupil has already learned to “love and respect other people”; good breeding expresses this in socially appropriate ways (§145). Its civility is graceful and natural; it derives real and not feigned pleasure from gratifying others (§§66, 93, 143, 144). The man of good breeding, Locke finally says, has “the true art of living in this world, and being both welcome and valued everywhere” (§143). “A Wise and Good Man can hardly want either the Opinion or Reality of being Great and Happy” (§90). Goodness in itself does not guarantee happiness, but the “wisdom” of good breeding does.

Good breeding, and the other-regarding virtues it crowns, bring us on a near approach to *sociability*, without abandoning Locke’s individualist and hedonist premises (Tarcov 1983, 131, 136; Myers 1998, 113, 123, 159). Locke frankly acknowledges that it

is the business of good breeding to “supple the natural stiffness” of men’s tempers, so as to accommodate them to one another (§143). But Lockean individuals are not so naturally prickly as to be *anti*-social. The cultivation of the social virtues may require curbing some parts of our nature (*cf.* §§38, 45), but they clearly have a *point d’appui* in others. The first seeds of sociable are planted by artifice in Locke’s educational scheme, but they eventually become rooted in the pupil’s very character. Despite the natural inclination to domineering and covetousness, for example, children learn to derive “more pleasure” from complaisance, liberality, and civility (§§109, 110). Liberality is first put on a mercenary footing, but the child comes ultimately (and inevitably, it seems) to gain real pleasure from it (§110). It is at this point that his virtue is fully grounded in knowledge—knowledge of the link between civility and personal happiness. Locke’s moral education relies more on experience than reading (§185) because this knowledge is best gained by tasting, as it were. This mode of procedure accords well with Locke’s empiricism in any case.

By the lights of *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, it seems that Locke would regard the purely negative or Hobbesian interpretation of moral duty, as a bare principle of no harm, to be not only insufficient for the happiness of society, but insufficient for the happiness of the individual. Conversely, civility and the rest of social virtue are not only compatible with individual happiness, but instrumental to it (*cf.* Locke, in King 1972, 307). In the terms of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, we should have to say that this kind of virtuous sociability is Locke’s vision of human happiness, the proper cultivation of rational nature. The knowledge on which it relies is two-fold. At the foundation is the knowledge that men are equal, and embrace of the resultant moral corollaries. But on top of this, the man of good breeding has discovered that a life of

socially benevolent virtue is the most pleasant life. Lockean citizens must possess both sorts of knowledge in order to be properly moral. The first provides the moral compass, the second provides rational motivation. Either one alone would not suffice.

CONCLUSION

The man of good breeding is the culmination of Locke's moral education, but he is not a philosopher. He certainly has not plumbed the "demonstrative morality" that Locke the philosopher projects as the true basis of morals. Yet he presumably fulfills the duty Locke imposes on us to arrive at a reasoned understanding of morality. He does have knowledge of key elements of the demonstrative morality, knowledge that could be widely shared by liberal citizens. This may help resolve some of the puzzles with which this essay began. Moral enlightenment could be both easily accessible, and a rare attainment. Full-blown demonstrative morality could be difficult to achieve—the more so since it would require a full rational theology—while its basic moral teaching, and even parts of its rational demonstration, might be easily grasped. Individual rights and the self-regarding virtues of acquisitive happiness are rather easily understood, as is the basic theology that supports them. For the other-regarding virtues, the logic of equality/equity constitutes a central part of the demonstration, and this too is within the grasp of all who will but "study" it in a fairly minimal sense (*Second Treatise* §6). Still, since this logic must be developed by the individual's reason, it could be neglected under certain circumstances. It could fail to motivate moral behavior where individuals did not appreciate the link between social morality and personal happiness. Whole eras of history would have been blind to key parts of the moral truth, as would profound philosophic minds, so long as they did not acknowledge the fundamental principle of human equality—or the centrality of preservation and comfort to the human purpose. A failure to appreciate the link

between civility and human happiness would also obscure proper moral knowledge. To the question, “What does Locke expect us to know?” the answer would then be that ideally, we would grasp the full philosophical elaboration of his demonstrative morality; but that in practice, the simpler logic of equity and civility, and of their place in human happiness, would suffice, in tandem with acceptable notions of divinity.

Tangential support for this interpretation appears in the moral outlook of Locke’s heirs. Liberal citizens today, when asked why they do not steal or cheat, why they respect the rights of others even when they could take advantage with impunity, are likely to say simply because doing otherwise would not be *fair*. The moral logic is hardly sophisticated, but it is essentially Locke’s principle of equity. That is, they believe wholeheartedly in the principle of equality, and from it they draw the moral conclusion that they cannot fairly claim for themselves any advantage they do not accord to others. If they add religious arguments, they rely on a god who endorses Lockean equity, including equal rights for those who believe differently than they. They do not typically make Hobbesian calculations regarding narrow advantage in their moral lives; they are moved rather by a sincere belief in equity and an “ingenuous detestation” of injustice (*Thoughts*, §110). Moreover, they are likely to take this moral principle beyond the ethic of no harm, into some form of social benevolence. At least, so it seems to this observer. Locke’s claim would be that they are listening to their reason in this, that they have found it to contribute to their happiness, and to that extent theirs is a rational morality.

This morality is certainly more rational than the one that preceded it, which in Locke’s view was founded on erroneous first principles, and clouded by jargon and superstition. Of course, it is not fully rational if citizens simply suppose the foundational principle of equality (and divinity), rather than deriving it philosophically from some

more fundamental premises, such as the concept of man as a “corporeal, rational creature.” That Locke was content to leave our understanding at this level in his more practical works indicates that he did not expect liberal citizenship to be fully enlightened. Education to citizenship has been a subject of debate in recent years among liberal theorists, including whether the education of liberal citizens must be “philosophical,” in the sense of creating fully critical thinkers.²⁷ When Locke speaks strongly of the duty we have to consider religion and morality aright, he seems to suggest it must. But Locke does not in practice hold us to so high a standard, partly because of the extreme difficulty of establishing moral principles on a truly philosophical level. In his view, the education of a typical liberal citizen properly stops something short of this, without abandoning the ideal of rationally-held beliefs. It may dispense with a fully critical assessment of all its assumptions, but neither will it be simple indoctrination. It will create citizens whose morality is more rational than was ever the case before, though in Locke’s view it is too much to ask that it be fully rational, in the philosophical sense (*cf.* Galston 1991, 243-4).

This limitation could have important consequences. If the philosophical basis of equality is not fully grasped, it could lead to confusion about what its moral corollary equity requires, in its remoter applications (*cf.* Galston 1991, 243; Myers 1998, 41; Waldron 2002, 47). As the history of liberalism has amply demonstrated, the moral principle of equity can lead to widely differing understandings of justice, from the libertarian to the redistributionist. John Rawls, famously, made egalitarian “fairness” the root of justice, and drew from it some consequences that seem distinctly non-Lockean (Rawls 1971, Ch. 1 *et passim*; Myers 1998, 138; Zuckert 2002b). Part of this problem might have to be laid at Locke’s feet, if it was part of his intention to bequeath to us only a partially rational or enlightened morality. In the end, the susceptibility of Lockean

political culture to such a range of interpretations—and to endless contestation over them—may partly be attributed to the simplified moral argument he bequeathed to his heirs.²⁸

A related problem is revealed by one widely-recognized pathology of liberal morality, the tendency for self-centered assertions of rights to overwhelm the principle of responsibility to others (Glendon 1991, 14, 34 *et passim.*; Galston 1991, Ch. 12). Locke's reliance on equity is meant to forestall this problem, since it incorporates respect for others into even the minimal, "no harm" interpretation of natural law. Equity understood as civility or social benevolence would be an even greater bar to narrow selfishness. The question is, however, whether these virtues arise spontaneously in a "Lockean culture," and are strong enough to counter the selfish tendencies of the rights regime (Galston 1991, Ch 11; Berkowitz 1999, xiii, 6). Locke's answer seems to be partly that yes, the virtues of equity are a natural outgrowth of a culture of equality. I have suggested that the generality of liberal citizens today do in fact exhibit these traits. But the very lengths to which Locke must go to inculcate these traits in his educational treatise give one pause. Religion is an important bulwark for these principles, as Locke asserts in many contexts, and as contemporary cultural critics often point out. Yet Locke seems to go out of his way in the more practical works we have looked at to provide a non-religious foundation for morality, rooting it mostly in mundane interests and the joys of civil intercourse (Pangle 1988, 201-5; Forde 2001, 400, 403, 408). This gives us a teaching more apt for the secular world that grew up in Locke's wake, but it may not be sufficiently stable or secure in this configuration, practically as well as theoretically. One wonders for example whether the joys of civility and "good breeding" will really suffice to win over the "Quarrelsome and Contentious" of the *Second Treatise*, who exemplify the anti-social tendencies of human nature and who have failed to take the logic of equity to heart (§34).

However great these joys may be for those who have come to them, they may be a precarious way to reconcile personal pleasure and the social good for an entire culture.

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¹ *Second Treatise of Government*, §124; cf. §12; *Questions concerning the Law of Nature*, pp. 103, 211, 219. Henceforth the former work will be cited as *Second Treatise*, by section number, and the latter as *Questions*, by the page numbers of the edition found in the Bibliography.

² “Introduction” (I.1.5). Assertions to the same effect are found at I.4.12, II.23.12, IV.10.1, and IV.11.8. Henceforth, this work will be cited as *Essay*, in the text.

³ Thus does Locke explain the phenomenon of men indulging vice even when they seem to know better—they have not properly formed their view of the good (II.21.35; cf. 53, 56, 69; *Thoughts* §§ 33, 38, 200; Shouls 1992, 99, 113, 227).

⁴ Locke’s contemporaries the “Cambridge Platonists,” made this argument in both theological and secular terms (v. Cudworth [1731], p. 83; Smith [1660], 132, 137, 142), but it was also a theological commonplace (Ashcraft 1969, 199; Shapiro 1983, 89-92, 101, 106; Marshall 1994, 292). Edward Stillingfleet, the Bishop of Worcester, made innate ideas a focal point of his attack on the *Essay* (parts of this polemic were appended to Book I of the *Essay*’s later editions). On the other hand, the Anglican divine Richard Hooker had denied innate ideas some 100 years before (Hooker [1593] I.6).

⁵ See *Questions*, Questions II, IV (see also note 3, above). This work was composed perhaps in 1663, some 25 years before Locke’s most well-known works.

Locke’s formulations sometimes seem to suggest innateness, when he says, for example, that the natural law is “writ in the Hearts of all Mankind” (*Second Treatise* §11; cf. *Questions*, p. 101). But this can be nothing but shorthand for the moral logic by which we discover natural law, or perhaps the most obvious precepts of natural law.

⁶ Ashcraft 1969, 219; Grant, 1987, 26n; Dunn 1984, 65; Horwitz 1990, pp. 22-28; Pangle 1988, 197-8; Locke, *Correspondence*, IV:110-13, 767-8, 786-7.

⁷ Yolton 1970, 172; Rabieh 1991, 941; Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Chs. 14-15; cf. *Second Treatise* §12. Coby (1987) draws several individual “laws of nature” out of the *Second Treatise*, but they do not seem to illuminate the moral demonstration per se.

⁸ *Essay* II.21.33, 41, 52, 62; *Of Ethics in General* (an unpublished essay of uncertain date), p. 311. Henceforth the latter will be cited as *Ethics*, by page numbers of the King edition. See also Culverwell [1652], 42.

⁹ *Essay* I.3.13, II.21.52-56; *Questions*, Question VI; *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* §§33, 38, 107. Henceforth this work will be cited as *Thoughts*.

¹⁰ James Tyrell raised this objection on behalf of “some thinkeing men at Oxford” (*Correspondence* IV: 101; Locke’s reply, 110-13); William Molyneux echoed the complaint (*id.*, 508, 729).

¹¹ See the early *Questions*, pp 101-3, 205-7; *Thoughts*, §§136, 139; *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (henceforth cited as *Reasonableness*, by the page numbers of the edition in the Bibliography), p. 44. From Locke’s private, unpublished writings, see *Ethics*, *passim*.

¹² Grotius [1625], Prolegomena 13; Cudworth 1996, 122-4; Shapiro 1983, 88, 107, Zuckert 1994, 188; Forde 2001, 398. cf. *Essay* II.28.10-11. These two reasons for Locke’s adherence to a theological basis for morality may be linked. He indicates in the *The Reasonableness of Christianity* that the classics, in defining virtue as the naturally fitting or beautiful, left it “unendowed” or unmotivated at the individual level (p. 162). This may be true of any morality rooted in a merely natural teleology, without providential rewards and punishments.

¹³ Tully 1991, xvii; Hooker [1593] I.3.4; Pufendorf [1673] I.2.2, I.3.10. Isaac Newton believed that the overall structure of nature was a creation of divine providence—that is, that material nature obeyed rational laws only because God had decreed it so—and that God had not only set the universe in motion, but periodically needed to refresh that motion ([1687], 369-72; [1704], 540-43). See Jacob 1981, ch. 1.

¹⁴ See Locke’s *Correspondence* IV: 110-113, 729, 786-7. Strauss 1953, 207; 1959, 202-3, 206; Dunn 1984, 30, 84-5; Grant 1987, 25-6; Pangle 1988, 197-8; Horwitz 1990, 25-6, Marshall 1994, 384-7; Waldron 2002, 94-5. See also *Reasonableness*, p. 139.

¹⁵ These basic principles seem remarkably well formed even in the early *Questions* (pp. 153, 167-9, 197).

¹⁶ Cf. Grant 1987, 25. This is not to suggest that Locke denied the possibility of revelation. He allows that revelation may be accepted on points “above reason,” or where reason can form only conjectures (*Essay* IV.18.7-9). But it can never contradict certainties of sense or reason (IV.18.5-6); and reason must always certify the genuineness of revelation, even for one who seems to hear the direct voice of God (IV.16.14). The determinative principle is that “reason is natural revelation,” and “revelation must be judged of by reason” (*Essay* IV.19.4, 14).

¹⁷ “Men, therefore, cannot be excused from understanding the words, and framing the general notions relating to religion, right” (*Conduct*, p. 342; cf. *Essay* IV.20.3, IV.17.24).

¹⁸ §28; *Essay* IV.4.9. See also Cicero *de Finibus* III.20.67; Olivecrona 1974b, 224.

¹⁹ This is striking especially since Locke prefaces his derivation of natural law with a passage from Richard Hooker, who derives a principle of “mutual Love” from equality (via a remarkably Hobbesian logic, §5; Hooker [1593], I.8.7). In Locke’s *Second Treatise*, we all have a *right* to provide more active or charitable forms of assistance to others—we have the power to enforce the natural law on others’ behalf—but this is not a duty (§§7-13). Of course, sovereign power, once instituted, has positive duties rooted in natural law to serve the general good (§159), but for individuals in the natural state, duty is limited to the principle of no harm, according to the *Second Treatise*.

²⁰ This is striking especially in light of the remarks on charity in the *First Treatise* (§42). See Strauss 1953, 248; Pangle 1988, 144; Dunn 1968. Some earlier doctrines of property had a charitable principle built into them, making Locke’s silence even more striking. See Aquinas *Summa Theologica* II-II Q 66, A7; Grotius [1625], 193.

²¹ §§7-13; cf. §125. This set of problems has led some interpreters of Locke to assert that he does not believe in natural law—perhaps not even in morality—using it only as rhetorical cover (Zuckert 1994, Chs. 7-9, 2002b, 191; Pangle 1988, 197-205). For arguments more along the lines pursued here, see Grant, 1987, 22-6; Forde 2001.

²² Obligation and motivation are not the same thing for Locke, but, given his psychology, they are inseparable. See *Essay* I.1.13; II.7.3-4; II.21.41-56, 70; II.28.5-8.

²³ I do not suggest that the two works are inconsistent. The *Second Treatise* may limit itself to the minimal morality that liberal government can enforce on individuals, while *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* embodies morality in its full extent (cf. Marshall 1994, 293-8). This of course would raise very interesting questions about what “liberal morality” is.

²⁴ Compare the unpublished fragment *Venditio*, where Locke suggests that the rules of morality in property go beyond the bare demands of justice (reprinted in Dunn 1968, 84-7; cf. Marshall 1994, 293-8, 324; Berkowitz 1999, 103).

²⁵ Locke’s intimate Damaris Masham wrote in 1704 that he had thought civility a much more important duty than was generally realized, and that he had recommended essays of Pierre Nicole as a source on the subject (Marshall 1994, 179).

²⁶ Locke clearly expects a complex and nuanced moral understanding to be developed from this root: “as their capacities enlarge, other rules and cases of justice, and rights concerning Meum and Tuum, may be proposed and inculcated” (§110). But the root remains the same.

²⁷ The foremost champion of this position is Amy Gutmann (1987). Her argument has been challenged by Galston (1991, Ch. 11), and Ruderman and Godwin (2000), among others.

²⁸ Michael Zuckert traces the moral principle of equity or reciprocity in Locke to the nature of the rights claim as an exclusive property claim *per se*: the individual’s claim of such rights compels him logically to recognize the like claim in others (Zuckert 1994, 277-8; 2002a, 195-6; cf. Myers 1998, 169). This derivation is similar to the one I find in Locke. The *Second Treatise*, and especially *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* suggest to me that the derivation I am describing, based first on equality rather than property or rights, is the one Locke expects individuals to use in their moral reflections. This version of the “demonstrative morality” seems more accessible, but would be more vulnerable to Rawlsian and other deformations than one rooted in property and consequently liberty.

We might find perverse confirmation of the thesis proposed here in the vulnerability of Lockean culture to these deformations.