

Interpretation

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Equality, Property, and the Problem of Partisanship: The Lockean Constitution as Mixed Regime

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From its inception, modern liberalism, like Aristotelian political philosophy, has endeavored to moderate the human propensity for partisanship.¹ In contrast to its contemporary variants that attempt to maintain a position of theoretical and constitutional neutrality with respect to a diversity of plans or styles of living (e.g., Rawls, 1993; Ackerman, Larmore), however, modern liberalism in its classical, Lockean form attempts to address the problem of partisanship by promoting a particular mode of living that is nonetheless capable of blending or harmonizing without doing essential violence to the disparate classes and interests into which human beings tend naturally to divide.

In comparison with contemporary formulations of liberal neutralism, the Lockean approach to the problem of partisanship holds the salient advantage of its superior realism; no regime can be simply neutral with respect to the character formation of its subjects or citizens (Galston, pp. 7–8, 79–117). Yet the ultimate superiority of this approach remains in question. From sharply differing perspectives, Locke's leading twentieth-century critics object precisely to the ultimate simplicity, to the unwitting or disguised partiality or partisanship of the Lockean constitution. In C.B. MacPherson's widely discussed reading, the Lockean society is essentially an oligarchy, its justification of egalitarian property rights discrediting its egalitarian pretensions and amounting ultimately to a rationalization of a form of pleonexy. For Leo Strauss and Thomas Pangle, on the other hand, arguing from a more classical perspective, Locke's decisively egalitarian conception of natural rights represents an intellectually levelling doctrinarism and thereby neglects the cultivation of a spirit of rational distinctiveness sufficient to combat the dangers of mass conformism and majority tyranny inherent in modern democracies.

In Locke's defense, one might find something preliminarily suggestive in the fact that such eminent critics could find evidence in support of such divergent readings. However that may be, I believe that by pursuing the objections to Locke's oligarchic and to his democratic or egalitarian partisanship and by reconstructing the Lockean responses to these objections, we can recover an appreciation of the genuine complexity of Locke's constitutionalism,² and thereby place ourselves in a better position to judge the merits of the Lockean approach, relative to those of the premodern and contemporary approaches, to the problem of partisanship.

I

Let us consider first the objection to the Lockean regime as an oligarchy. This reading may seem to contradict the clear design of the *Second Treatise* in particular, wherein Locke encourages his readers to take the principle of natural human equality as given or fundamental, as an axiom of theology or something closely approaching a self-evident truth (II.4–6).³ Later in the same work, however, the scope and true significance of this principle appear more limited, in the light of Locke's concessions to "Age or Virtue . . . Excellency of Parts and Merit . . . Birth . . . and Alliance or Benefits" as the bases of certain forms of permissible inequality (II.54), and especially in the light of his defense of a significantly inegalitarian property right (II.36, 48, 50). Moreover, the deeper doubtfulness of Locke's embrace of the principle of equality is evident above all in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, wherein Locke observes

that there is a difference of degrees in Men's Understandings, Apprehensions, and Reasonings, to so great a latitude, that one may, without doing injury to Mankind, affirm, that there is a greater distance between some Men, and others, in this respect, than between some Men and some Beasts. (4.20.5; cf. 1.3.24, 25, 4.16.4; CU 6, 24, 34; Works 7.146)

Viewing this and like evidence from the perspective of social or socialized democracy, MacPherson fashions what stands for many Locke scholars as the seminal twentieth-century critique of Locke's political thought. MacPherson argues in summary that Locke's universalist, egalitarian rhetoric obscures the reality of Lockean political society, in which individuals are assigned differential political rights according to class-based differentials in their rational capacities, with the propertied excluding the laboring class from effective membership in the political society. Locke is a conservative or oligarchic defender of property in a capitalist or proto-capitalist political economy, employing the doctrine of universal equality in natural rights as an ideological rationalization of the interests of a particular class (pp. 194–262).

Because its particular virtues and vices have received extensive scholarly discussion, I will not here consider MacPherson's argument in detail. (For a range of opinions, see Ryan; Dunn [1969], pp. 203–41; Mansfield [1979]; Tully; Wood [1984], p. 7–10; Shapiro, pp. 128–29, 137–44; Ashcraft, pp. 260–85; Cohen, pp. 304–11; Pangle, pp. 158–71.) In response to this argument I wish only to build upon two general points. First, though I share with several of his critics the opinion that the Lockean distributions of economic and of political power are significantly less inegalitarian than MacPherson maintains, I believe it important to acknowledge MacPherson's valuable service in drawing attention to the relations among classes of subjects or members within Locke's constitutional design. Second, I believe that though MacPherson prop-

erly draws attention to the fact of inequality in Locke, he misconceives the nature of that inequality and of the problem it represents for Locke. If we recognize the primacy of political or psychological as opposed to economic factors in the formation of class divisions (Mansfield, 1979; Pangle, pp. 170–71), we come to see both that MacPherson's objection points to the possibility of a still deeper, more radical oligarchic partisanship in Locke, and consequently that the considerable degree of material inequality that Locke accepts and even promotes serves in his constitutional design not as the substance and support of economic class domination, but instead as instrumental to his attempt at resisting the injustice that deeper, more fundamental divisions and antagonisms tend to generate.

In chapters 5 and 8 of the *Second Treatise* in particular, Locke gives the impression that absent any economically based cause for conflict, a condition of general peace must have obtained in both the prepolitical or prehistoric state of nature and the early period of political society (31, 51, 107–11). Yet as is well known, Locke elsewhere in the same work describes the state of nature in starkly Hobbesian terms (II.13, 90, 123, 127); and when he identifies the forces that drive us out of that state into society, he makes no mention of primarily material necessity, referring instead to the partiality and baseness of human nature and the degeneracy of at least some men (II.13, 91–92, 128). Even in chapters 5 and 8, Locke implies that at work very early in the development of the human mind if not from the very beginning is an expansive desire, a "desire of having more than Men needed," an "*amor sceleratus habendi*" (II.37, 111; cf. 45, 115), a desire to transcend or conquer necessity, to magnify oneself by expanding the realm of one's own freedom and power.⁴

Locke's view recalls Machiavelli's observation of the two diverse humors or appetites that divide the human race into two fundamental classes.⁵ Notwithstanding his description of it as "the first and strongest desire" (I.88; also 86), for Locke what is truly natural to or universally compelling in human beings is not the desire for self-preservation⁶ but rather an indefinite desire for well-being, a desire for happiness alongside an aversion to misery (*ECHU* 1.3.3; cf. *STCE* 115), whose polarities appear in the *Two Treatises* as desires for self-preservation and for self-magnification or dominion. It appears, however, that Locke may observe in the characteristically popular appetite or aversion a greater submissiveness than does Machiavelli, in the form either of a narrow desire for self-preservation or of an overactive desire to *believe* that one is not oppressed. In virtually the same breath in which he declares that "*The people generally ill treated, and contrary to right, will be ready on any occasion to ease themselves of a burden that sits heavy upon them,*" Locke concedes that people in general "are hardly to be prevailed with to amend the acknowledged Faults, in the Frame they have been accustom'd to" (II.224, 223; also 230; cf. II.91–93, I.33, and more generally *ECHU* 1.3.23–27, 2.33.6–7; *STCE* 146, 164; *CU* 34, 41).

Especially with the example of Machiavelli in mind, one must therefore wonder what are the jural implications of Locke's implicit questioning of the unity of the human species. Despite his seemingly confident affirmations of the principle of natural jural human equality, Locke's implicit account of political-psychological class divisions in the *Two Treatises* raises the question whether according to Locke's own observations nature has endowed a relative few with an overriding ambition, a proud desire of dominion insatiable except by the exercise of despotic power over others, and endowed the greater number with, if not a positive desire for subjection to such power, at least a willingness to suffer rather than resist it—whether nature thus does not mandate moral or jural equality, but instead sanctions rule by the stronger, serving the interest of the stronger. Does Jefferson's great teacher then implicitly, unintentionally support the dismal proposition that Jefferson himself would memorably reject with virtually the final stroke of his pen, namely that “the mass of mankind has . . . been born with saddles on their backs, [and] a favored few booted and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately . . .” (letter to Roger C. Weightman, June 24, 1826, p. 729)?

In the *Second Treatise*, the problem of political mixing or of reconciling these disparate principles to a common set of laws calls for the elaboration of the psychological grounds of a modernized principle of republican liberty. Those inclined toward contentment with bare self-preservation at the cost of liberty must come to embrace the principle that consent is the indispensable guarantor of preservation, that “*Freedom* from Absolute, Arbitrary Power, is so necessary to, and closely joyned with a Man's Preservation, that he cannot part with it, but by what forfeits his Preservation and Life together” (TT II.23). On the other hand, those inclined to value liberty only insofar as it facilitates their domination of others must come to regard *self*-dominion as the fullest and only truly desirable form of dominion; they must come to experience the defensive capacity to resist the tyrannical assertions of other individuals, and ultimately of their own exorbitant desires, as the only source of true freedom and power.

Locke's attempt at expanding the desire of self-preservation so that it encompasses a defensive desire for liberty operates on both rational and sentimental levels. On the former level, Locke argues that one cannot reasonably claim a right of life or of self-preservation without also claiming a right of liberty or of self-disposal. Locke suggests at least at one point that the “strong [if not insuperable] desire of Self-preservation” in rational beings is the foundation of a corresponding right (I.86; cf. 88), and seems moreover to regard the natural primacy of our sense of self-concernment (see *ECHU* 2.27.17, 18, 26) as the foundation of the unalienable character of that right. Each individual must retain the ultimate right of judging and enforcing the conditions of self-preservation, because the wills of others are ultimately opaque to us, and (to say the least) cannot be presumed to harbor a reliable concern for our own preservation (especially II.22). The right of preservation becomes inseparable in Locke's argument from the right of liberty, as the principle of self-preservation entails

logically the principle of self-disposal or self-ownership (II.6, 23, 27, 44, 55, 59–60, 123).

As it is necessary, in Locke's view, for individuals not only or primarily to *know*, to assent cognitively to the interdependence of preservation and liberty, but also for them to *feel* it (II.94, 168, 225, 230), the project of practically binding the two principles must include an attempt at forming the passions or sentiments as well. This attempt assumes various forms throughout Locke's work. The formation of a healthy desire for liberty is clearly the aim, for instance, of Locke's advice in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* that children be treated as rational beings long before they approach full, adult rationality, or that they be indulged in the illusion that their activities are for the most part self-directed (STCE 81: cf. 41, 72–77, 95, 123, 148; cf. Tarcov, pp. 91–93, 171–76). A similar design is manifest in his attempts via the rhetoric of the *Two Treatises* at raising in his audience a proud contempt for the condition of slavery (TT I.1; also II.23, 163, 239) and a righteous indignation or even hatred for the wielders and seekers of absolute, arbitrary power (TT epigraph, II.10, 11, 16, 93, 172, 181, 228).

Of potentially far greater effect, however, than the *Two Treatises'* rhetoric alone as means of infusing a healthy spiritedness into the desire of self-preservation are the Lockean principles of legitimacy themselves and the constitutional provisions that flow from them. The ambiguity of Locke's account renders it difficult to estimate precisely the intended or likely effect, in this respect, of his insistence on meaningful, rational consent as a condition of governmental legitimacy. Yet if Locke's practical sympathies are as democratic, in the whole or in part, as some have argued (Kendall; Ashcraft; Pangle, pp. 168–70), it seems reasonable to suggest that a significant part of the potential value that Locke assigns to the principle of popular representation lies in the quiet pride associated with the understanding that one's explicit approval is a necessary condition of governmental legitimacy (see II.141, 143, 153–54, 157–58, 197–98, 212, 215–17, 222; contrast Rousseau, *Social Contract* II.1, III.15).

In any event, a clearer illustration of this aspect of Locke's intention appears in the "most characteristic part" of his teaching (Strauss [1953], p. 234), his discussion of property. Locke begins this discussion by grounding the right of property in the right of preservation, broadly conceived as the right to provide for the "Support and Comfort" of our being (II.25, 26). Just how broadly he conceives of this right becomes clearer, however, when he almost immediately thereafter introduces an alternative principle as the basis of legitimate appropriation. Because "every Man has a *Property* in his own *Person*," Locke continues, the

Labour of his Body, and the *Work* of his Hands . . . are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the State that Nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his *Labour* with, and joyned to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his *Property*. (II.27; also 44)

If laboring is in itself sufficient to create an original property right, then the right of appropriation obtains irrespective of any purely material considerations, irrespective of the claimant's level of material need or comfort. The labor theory of appropriation constitutes in the end only a particularly crucial corollary of the fundamental principle of human agency. Locke's doctrine of self-ownership means most generally that one has a natural right simply to *act*, to employ one's agency or action-producing faculty so as best to secure one's own well-being, up to the point at which one's actions threaten the domination, the unjust appropriation of the labor or the agency, of another.

Locke's insistence on constitutional protection for an expansive, quantitatively unlimited right of productive appropriation represents much more than an attempt at ameliorating the natural condition of material unprovidedness (II.32, 37, 40–46) or at creating the conditions for general private happiness in material plenty. At least as important as its effect on material conditions is its psychological effect; the desire in young children for "*Propriety and Possession*" expresses a "love of Dominion" or of the power that accompanies ownership (STCE 105). The protection of the right of appropriation and the concomitant raising and channelling of the acquisitive desire can therefore serve with peculiar efficacy to cultivate in ordinary subjects an expanded, more assertive, dignified, vigilant sense of self. As Locke explains in the *Essay*, our "mixed-mode" ideas of actions, the experiential data of human agency or freedom, represent only "fleeting, and transient Combinations of simple *Ideas*" (2.22.8). But whereas the merely transient, momentary existence of most actions renders uncertain their psychological or pedagogical power, their power to imprint themselves on our memory and then to guide our future actions, the particular action of appropriating represents the employment and manifestation of one's freedom to create or enlarge a visible, tangible, more-or-less enduring domain,⁷ and for this reason carries a peculiar power to expand the individual's consciousness of self.

In insisting that the "great and *chief end* therefore, of Mens uniting into Commonwealths, and putting themselves under Government, is the *Preservation*" not simply of their biological integrity or personal comfort, but "*of their Property*" (II.124; also 222), Locke adopts a "forward defense" strategy, hoping to raise the proper spirit of defensiveness against tyranny or illegitimacy by expanding the boundaries of the self, enlarging one's personal domain of freedom and power and thus making more visible and more complete that which is to be defended. Out of the common concern for preservation, the Lockean stress on property seeks to forge a vigilant, assertive demand for preservation *in freedom*. In defending a natural, unalienable right of private property or appropriation, Locke defends not a sordid, mean-spirited materialism,⁸ but rather an indispensable bulwark of civil or political liberty.

A complementary design is evident in Locke's attempt at moderating or taming the desire for dominion. Just as the achievement of a rational, civil

consensus requires the leavening of the desire for self-preservation by its mixture with a moderate love of dominion, so the extreme love of dominion must be moderated to bring it into conformity with the imperative of preservation. Locke avoids a simple reversal of the Hobbesian priority of preservation to liberty. Alongside his declaration that “*the end of Law* is not to abolish or restrain, but to *preserve and enlarge Freedom*” (TT II.5–7), Locke proclaims emphatically that political power properly conceived “hath no other end but preservation” (II.135; also 124). In order properly to moderate the desire for dominion or to defend the principle of liberty as distinct from that of sheer license or arbitrariness, Locke maintains the grounding of that principle in a respect for the enduring sway of natural necessity (cf. Mansfield [1989], pp. 181–213). But the key to the taming of the desire for dominion so that it may coexist with the desire for preservation lies once again in Locke’s defense of the right of appropriation.

Whereas Locke associates the desire to appropriate or to possess with the vice of covetousness, declaring it one of the “two Roots of almost all the Injustice and Contention, that so disturb Humane Life,” and as such to be “early . . . weeded out” of children’s prevailing motivations (STCE 105; also 110), he carefully distinguishes the desire for possession from other, more direct expressions of the desire for dominion; the possessive desire to have “things” or objects at one’s disposal is less surely productive of injustice than the desire to be “submitted to by others,” or to have actual persons at one’s disposal (STCE 105, 104). For this reason Locke’s correction of the vice of covetousness in the *Education* does not entail the suppression or extirpation of the desire to acquire. To the contrary, he recommends teaching children that one “loses nothing by his *Liberality*,” indeed that “the most *Liberal* has always most plenty” (110). Locke confirms his approval of an appropriately moderated acquisitiveness by his subsequent suggestion concerning the provision of playthings for children. Lest they be taught “Pride, Vanity, and Covetousness” along with a perpetual, inherently immoderate dissatisfaction, children according to Locke should have few or no playthings bought for them, but should instead be required to make them for themselves. “This will accustom them to seek for what they want in themselves . . . whereby they will be taught Moderation in their Desires, Application, Industry, Thought, Contrivance, and Good Husbandry” (STCE 130). The acquisitive desire is not to be suppressed, but instead to be subjected to the discipline of industry or laboring, and thus detached from the desire to command others’ labor, as the condition of its gratification (cf. Tarcov, pp. 141–45; contrast Axtell in *Educational Writings*, p. 207 n. 3; Seliger pp.157–58; Tully, p. 148; Dunn [1984], p. 40).

Locke’s legitimation of acquisitiveness by associating it with liberality and self-reliant creativity in the *Education* is in perfect harmony with the teaching of chapter 5 of the *Second Treatise*. Appropriation in unlimited amounts is a natural, unalienable right, according to the latter, so long as it is accomplished

(directly or indirectly) through productive laboring. Whoever “appropriates land to himself by his labour, does not lessen but increase the common stock of mankind” (*TT* II.37; also 40–44, 48). The possibility of liberality rests effectively on the creation of wealth, and thus on the encouragement of productive industry. More fundamentally, the establishment of justice as the bond of civil society, implying the protection of everyone’s “Title to the product of his honest Industry, requires the creation or preservation of an abundance of material opportunity sufficient to enable all to subsist and even to profit by their own industry.”⁹ Locke conceives of the replacement of traditional charity with modern technology, with the development of “Invention and Arts” (II.44) that will revolutionize the productivity of human labor, as essential to the solution of this aspect of the problem of the state of nature.¹⁰

The appeal of this solution lies in its furtherance of Locke’s attempt to effect the “endowment” of justice (cf. *Works* 7.150), or in its psychological realism. While the acquisitive passion acquires legitimacy in Locke’s scheme by virtue of its service to the cause of preservation and ultimately to the cause of rationality, it remains attractive for many individuals, notwithstanding its subjection to the condition of laborious productivity, by virtue of its enduring potential for gratifying the desire for dominion or inequality. In the course of his defense of the right of appropriation, Locke contends that “Men have agreed to disproportionate and unequal Possessions of the Earth” (II.50); the invention of money in particular has “introduced (by Consent) larger Possessions, and a Right to them” (II.36; emphasis supplied). Recognizing not only the natural differences among individuals in “*Parts and Merit*” (II.54), but also the equally important human desire to be credited for such distinction, Locke insists that a well-constituted political society must guarantee the rewards of superior industry. “God gave the World to Men in Common,” but gave it especially “to the use of the Industrious and Rational,” to those who enlarge the common stock by their rational, productive industry (II.34; also 37, 48).

The Lockean constitution aims thus to transform the desire for inequality or dominion, replacing its manifestation in the “Quarrelsome and Contentious” idleness of traditional upper classes with its more socially useful expression in the active productivity of the modern commercial classes, among others.¹¹ Locke seems even to expect that the pride that the industrious experience in their own providence, in their partial mastery of nature, will provide the grounds for a certain generosity toward the less accomplished. Just as he suggests in the *Education* a principle for moderating the desire to possess that serves to legitimate that desire, so in this case he suggests that children should learn civility or respect for the principle of natural equality in part by learning that “No part of their Superiority will be hereby lost; but the Distinction increased . . . The more they have, the better humour’d they should be taught to be . . .” (*STCE* 117; also 109). The psychological subtlety of Locke’s defense

of the principle of natural jural equality is nicely exemplified in this educational stratagem: respectful assent to the principle of common humanity appears less a duty than a mark of dignity, a privilege of a distinguished status.¹²

In brief, Locke seeks to address the problem of partisanship or of class division as it appears in the *Second Treatise* by designing an egalitarian principle that is capable of accommodating the natural or ineradicable inequalities among human beings. By conceiving of human equality as grounded in the principle of property in oneself, Locke conceives of equality as a two-dimensional principle, in which the majority can find a guarantee of the preservation that is their primary concern, while it secures for the more ambitious minority the opportunity to achieve at least the more civil forms of eminence. The rewarding of rational industry bases social distinction upon a standard of achievement that is understandable, accessible, and beneficial to the common majority.

Yet Locke remains skeptical of the possibility of perfectly harmonizing the disparate passions and interests with each other or with the public good. The despotic and the slavish passions cannot be perfectly rechannelled to conform with the requirements of justice, but must at some point be sanctioned or coerced. In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, Locke counsels that the inculcation of “an ingenuous Detestation of this shameful Vice . . . will be a better Guard against *Dishonesty*, than any Considerations drawn from Interest” (110). As this counsel suggests, the concern for reputation is to serve as the primary psychological mechanism for inculcating a prerational or sentimental detestation of vice. Though reputation is “not the true Principle and Measure of Vertue . . . yet it is that, which comes nearest to it” (*STCE* 61). “*Esteem and Disgrace* are . . . the most powerful Incentives to the Mind, when once it is brought to relish them” (56; cf. *ECHU* 2.28.12; also 1.3.25).

A well-cultivated concern for reputation clearly holds substantial power, in Locke’s view, to sustain a fidelity to the requirements of justice even at the extremities of political life, in circumstances in which such fidelity demands the greatest personal sacrifices or acts of devotion.¹³ A respect for the ultimate limits of the power of such a concern to govern the profoundly expansive desires, however, is evident in Locke’s contention that “*the best fence against Rebellion*” or against tyrannical designs lies not in actual or prospective rulers’ desire to be or to appear godlike in their justice as well as their power (II.42, 166), but rather in the “*Doctrine of a Power in the People of providing for their safety a-new by a new Legislative*” (II.226). The “appeal to heaven” reduces to an appeal to popular vigilance (II.20, 21, 168, 176, 241–42; cf. Pangle, p. 204). By raising a popular willingness in extreme circumstances to take up arms against illegitimate rulers, Locke hopes to intimidate the willful and thus to diminish their appetites for the sorts of actions that would properly provoke popular resistance. A similar, more subtle indication of Locke’s aim to combine appeals to “ingenuous” and more elementally interested motives appears in

his stern admonition that the penalty is—not simply or arbitrarily, but—“justly death” for a soldier’s disobedience of even “the most dangerous or unreasonable” command of a superior (II.139; see more generally I.92).

In providing these internal and external sanctions—fear of disgrace and fear of superior force—in order to ensure conformity with the requirements of justice, Locke in effect subjects governors and ordinary members alike to the rule of necessity in one form or another. Of course, inasmuch as all sets of laws require sanctions with teeth for their enforcement, the imperfect coincidence of self-interest and justice and thus the persistence of the necessity of negative sanctions raise no serious objection to the legitimacy of a given political order. Yet one may reasonably question whether the Lockean society can provide a truly congenial home for its various members, and in particular for its most ambitious members. For it would seem that the members of this class in particular, united by their common disrespect for the rule of mere necessity, would require compelling reasons or ends that transcend necessity in order to justify their submission or self-restraint. In confining the enterprises of the most ambitious to pursuits that serve directly or indirectly the relatively low, prosaic end of preservation, contrary to the concern of MacPherson and others the Lockean constitution appears partial to the egalitarian interest, to the interest characteristic of the majority rather than that of the few.

Viewed with a eye toward its egalitarian partisanship, the Lockean regime raises this obvious but important question: if preservation itself is justified as a necessary condition of happiness (II.57), then would it not represent the highest, purest expression of human nature for the truly ambitious individuals to seek radical freedom or sovereignty, to experience all limitations on personal agency or volition as alienating and to harbor a radically revolutionary animus against any conventional or political restraint?¹⁴ But along with this question arises a deeper one: if it were possible for such members to be tamed in accordance with Locke’s requirements, to find satisfying outlets for their ambitions in the service of egalitarian ends, at what cost would their satisfaction be purchased?

II

In order to grasp fully the objection to Locke’s democratic or egalitarian partisanship, we must consider his deeper understanding of the problem of partisanship, focusing on its doctrinal dimension. In making “the weakness of our Faculties in this State of *Mediocrity*, which we are in in this World” (*ECHU* 4.12.10; also 4.14.2) a great theme of the *Essay*, Locke refers not only to the ultimately limited reach of the human understanding, but also to its extreme fragility and errancy, its vulnerability to capture by the “busy and boundless Fancy of Man” (2.1.2). “[Tis] Phansye,” Locke observes in a 1659 letter, that

“is the great commander of the world” and that “rules us all under the title of reason,” acting as “the great guide both of the wise and the fooleish” (*CJL* No. 81). The distinctive—and at least in its milder forms, quite common—human susceptibility to madness (2.11.13, 2.33.4–5; cf. Mehta, pp. 15–24, 80–118), as well as the deeply impressive diversity of moral codes across human societies (1.3.4–14; *LN* 7; *TT* 1.56–59), attests for Locke the great power and disorderliness of the human imagination.

Whether due to pride or a desire for a certain form of security, “*most Men cannot . . . be at quiet in their Minds, without some Foundation or Principles to rest their Thoughts on,*” and indeed “will sooner part with their Lives, and whatever is dearest to them, than suffer themselves to doubt, or others to question” the truth of those principles, “how remote soever from Reason” (*ECHU* 1.3.24, 21; also 1.3.25–27). On the other hand, flattered by “the Love of something extraordinary, the Ease and Glory it is to be inspired and be above the common and natural ways of Knowledge,” and cognizant of the “power it gives one man over another, to have the Authority to be the Dictator of Principles, and Teacher of unquestionable Truths” (4.19.8, 1.4.24), a smaller number profess sectarian doctrines in order to further their ambition or gratify their love of dominion (3.10; *LCT* 23–26, 35, 43, 52, 55). Whereas the fundamental partisan or class division appears in the *Second Treatise* in the opposition between a relatively passive majority preoccupied with their own private preservation and a minority actively pursuing their own aggrandizement, it appears in the *Essay* as a division between the leaders and the “common soldiers” of doctrinal, sectarian movements (4.20.18; cf. 4.19 *passim*).

A project of mental reform must then accompany the *Second Treatise*’s scheme of institutional reform in order for Locke adequately to address the problem of partisanship. If rulers and subjects are to achieve the levels of moderation and spiritedness that sustain legitimate government, they must cease to think of their dominion and subjection as divinely ordained or naturally given, and must come to affirm their divinely granted or natural property in themselves (cf. *TT* II.27, 44, 123 with *ECHU* 2.27.17–18, 26). This means first that they must come to understand their religion as a simple, plain creed, requiring no priestly elite for its interpretation and guiding the faithful to the rational pursuit of temporal happiness as the surest path to eternal salvation (*Works* 7.5, 147, 157–58; cf. Zuckert [1986], pp. 199–202; Rabieh). More generally, they must cease at least in public to take their direction from any vision of an overarching *summum bonum* (2.21.55; Pangle, p. 184).

This explains in part why, as Harvey Mansfield, Jr., observes, Locke like modern constitutionalists in general declines to argue the soundness of specific partisan visions of the good or of happiness, instead counseling the claimants to understand those visions reductively, as expressions of passion, and then to rank the various passions in order of practical priority according to their status as naturally necessary or merely fanciful ([1989], p. 185; *STCE* 106–7; *ECHU*

2.21.45). Notwithstanding the essential importance to the Lockean political society of material improvement generated by “Invention and Arts” (*IT* II.44), one can view this aspect of Locke’s project of mental reform as an implicit act of resistance to the transition that Glaucon insists upon in Book 2 of Plato’s *Republic*, the transition from the necessitous to the luxurious or feverish city (369b–373e). A harsh reality of the human condition is that given the ordinary frailty of the understanding in its attempts at governing the imagination, as our preoccupation intensifies with visions of our highest good and thus of our final liberation from necessity, our actual subjection to the rule of necessity deepens. Natural necessity remains unconquered and is in fact often strengthened by humankind’s efforts at self-liberation.

But the modern egalitarian conception of natural right with which Locke would supplant the classical or premodern tradition of political philosophy is not itself free from potentially serious difficulties. The inegalitarianism of the Platonic tradition of political philosophy proceeds from the general conviction that a healthy, well-constituted community features an ordering of rank among its various classes involving unequal distributions of public offices, honors, and influence, with a view toward providing the leisure that facilitates and the love of distinction that energizes the serious pursuit of virtue. With this alternative in view, one sees more clearly the significance, for instance, of Locke’s replacement of the aristocratic concept of leisure with the more utilitarian or necessitarian concept of “recreation” (*STCE* 108, 206; *CJL* No. 328), appropriate to an ethic of motion rather than rest, of endless, industrious striving for endless increase. One can thus see also the significance and the potential danger of the Lockean education’s extensive cultivation of a heightened desire for esteem or sensitivity to the opinions of others, raising the question whether the respectably acquisitive Lockean gentry may tend to lose an appreciation of human excellence and to value civility over independence of spirit, and therefore may lose its capacity to resist the conformist tendencies of modern egalitarian societies (Strauss [1959], p. 38; Tarcov, pp. 116–17, 140–41, 194–98; Pangle, pp. 216–29, 264–66, 272; Mehta, pp. 133–53).

Underlying classical political science’s characteristic focus on the cultivation of virtue and its concomitant insistence upon viewing the question of legitimacy in the light of the question of the best regime is a confidence in the proposition that a properly teleological conception of the human good can limit as well as elevate human strivings within and outside the political arena. Classical political science therefore culminates in a vision of the absolute rule of the one best, the possessor of the highest wisdom and prudence with respect to the human good, and though it recognizes the extreme unlikelihood of the direct rule of the wise, it endeavors to supply the practical, constitutional conditions for the cultivation of genuine virtue. Again by contrast, Locke declines to present in the classically Socratic manner a comparative analysis of or dialectical confrontation among the various regimes or ways of living, instead effecting as noted

a Machiavellian reduction of the various partisan arguments to the status of subtheoretical passion.¹⁵ Locke presents a relatively doctrinaire, deontological conception of the principles of natural right, including an egalitarian right of judging and executing those principles, apparently, as in his distillation of Christianity, with a view to minimizing or eliminating the need for a class of priestly interpreters.¹⁶ He accords the principle of popular consent a weight equal to that of the principle of virtue or wisdom as a criterion for judging governmental legitimacy. Above all, Locke declines to provide an explicit account of the specifically philosophical way of living, instead emphasizing the predominantly technological inspiration of science.

The enormous power and disorderliness of the human imagination, which Locke implicitly accuses premodern political science of failing to govern and even dangerously flattering, greatly magnify the enduring problem of authenticating the claims of wisdom to the unwise and therewith intensify the need to distance philosophy as well as revealed religion from political life, to deny for practical purposes that wisdom as such has any special legislative claim. The essential danger is that Locke prescribes a remedy that exposes us to alternative, perhaps more virulent strains of the fundamental disease. Acutely sensitive to the human propensity toward partisanship and thus especially concerned to formulate an effective principle of political mixture, Locke not only rationalizes religion, but also sets forth a civilized or “socialized” conception of rationality (Pangle, p. 272). But in levelling reason’s distinctiveness or blunting its divisiveness by subjecting it to the rule of necessity (Mansfield [1989], p. 208), Locke risks obscuring the grounds for the principle of the sovereignty of reason within the human self or soul, upon which his doctrine of justice ultimately depends. If Locke teaches reason to subordinate its peculiar imperatives to the requirements of civility or social stability, he risks undermining reason’s capacity to stand in independent resistance to the tides of irrationalism that constantly threaten political societies. Further, if Locke abstracts too completely from the ultimate ends of rational action, if he too thoroughly ostracizes philosophy from public life, his attempt at advancing the cause of reasonable, nonarbitrary government through a more egalitarian conception of natural right may have the perverse effect of supporting more extreme and self-consciously arbitrary forms of willfulness—at best accidentally supportive of political equality—than had ever appeared in the corrupted practical products of premodern political thought.

It is most probable that Locke’s lowered conception of reason, his attempt at diverting it from the challenge of revelation as well as from its preoccupation with the *summum bonum*, does not represent an intentional, theoretical subordination of reason to the human will, but instead forms a part of his career-long struggle to advance the cause of reason—our “only Star and compass,” of necessity “our last Judge and Guide in every Thing” (*TT* 1.58; *ECHU* 4.19.14)—against the danger of arbitrariness in its theoretical or doctrinal as

well as its political expressions. Pangle suggests that Locke's attempt at furthering the cause of reason consists essentially in an attempt at liberating reason from the need to defend itself against its nettlesome traditional antagonists—an attempt, according to Pangle, that is shortsighted or precipitous on Locke's part, insofar as its controversies with various theological-political authorities provide an essential condition for philosophy's very existence, even as they threaten it (pp. 273–74).

It may be somewhat harsh thus to suggest that a certain softness, “an immoderate detestation of his necessarily embattled situation as a philosopher” leads Locke to neglect the conditions required for the cultivation of reason; Locke's divergence from classical political philosophy in this respect appears to proceed less from passion or inattention than from a considered, empirically grounded disagreement with the proposition that the imagination, in its longing to transcend the human condition of mortality, is as Pangle puts it “the natural partner of reason in the pursuit of the sublime” (pp. 274, 214; cf. 148). Yet if we can sympathize with Locke's doubts as to whether a culture of enchanted reverence is more apt to nourish the growth of philosophy, let alone of reasonable politics, than it is to generate fanaticism, the question persists concerning specifically why Locke believes that his lowered, utilitarian, complaisant conception of reason can generate and sustain the degree of respect for reason that a healthy or legitimate political society requires.

If Locke's assessment of the danger inherent in the forms of argument characteristic of premodern political philosophy justifies his refusal to honor any presumptive claim of superior reason to public sovereignty (cf. *TT* II.54), it certainly does not justify a neglect of the cultivation of reason within the Lockean political society. By the very fact of its ostracism from public life of the claim of wisdom proper, Locke's liberal political society all the more firmly requires a respect for the sovereignty of reason at least among its ordinary members, both in the private pursuit of happiness and in the act of consenting to governmental authority. The central dilemma of Lockean liberalism appears to lie in the twofold imperative of ostracizing reason while somehow cultivating it—of ostracizing the reason that distinguishes us from one another, while cultivating the reason that distinguishes rational from subrational beings (cf. Mansfield [1979], pp. 33–34). Moreover, if Locke is skeptical of the capacity of the large majority of human beings ever to become fully rational, if he expects the persistence into an indefinite future of some division of humankind into a more truly rational few and a less rational majority, then his promotion of an egalitarian conception of rationality must involve the cultivation of a rational elite that is contented to hide its character as an elite, at least with respect to matters of direct political or legislative significance.

Mindful of the peculiar requirements of political legitimacy or political rationality, Locke suggests that whereas it is unsafe for philosophy to appear fully exposed in public (*ECHU* 2.21.20), it may be safer and even salutary for it to

appear in public partially exposed, as the new “natural philosophy” or at least as “Under-Labourer” to the same (*ECHU* “Epistle to the Reader,” p. 10). By honoring the work of the new natural philosophy’s eminent “Master-Builders” as an exemplary employment of human reason, Locke advances his public purposes in the following ways. He establishes a prominent public model of devotion to reason and truth, of openness to the persuasive power of evidence and rational argumentation, and at the same time honors a form of reasoning or of the pursuit of truth that promises to generate very substantial utilitarian benefits while carrying in itself no significant legislative aspirations. Directing their immediate attentions toward the “how” rather than the “why” of nature, the members of a Lockean intellectual elite, at least in their publically influential capacity, prepare the augmentation of human power over nonhuman nature without supplying rationalizations for the partisan domination of some human beings by others.

Locke seems to calculate that the pursuance of this strategy will serve not only to facilitate the production of at least that level of material abundance required for the establishment of a general, societal consensus on the protection of property rights as a basic principle of justice, but also to lay the public foundation for the promotion of a societal respect for reason in the most generally accessible manner. It will tighten as it lends greater visibility to the bond between truth and utility, encouraging a conception of truth, if as a means, then as a means barely distinguishable from an end, indispensable for public and private happiness. Moreover, just as it grants “true Power and Honour” to the “wise and godlike” prince who protects and promotes the productive industry of his subjects (*TT* II.111, 42), so the Lockean society promises some substantial measure of such honor or admiring gratitude for the “generous Pains” (*ECHU* 4.3.16) of that class whose active technological providence is equally necessary to the prosperity of the whole society. For the Lockean society to honor scientific explorations of the infinite mysteries of material nature should therefore provide some publically beneficial direction for the indulgence of the more expansive yearnings of the intellectually refined or sophisticated class; in minimizing his ostracism of the latter, Locke minimizes the potential for cultivating enemies from within, and further reinforces his claim to have identified as the basis of rational consensus a principle of justice that would be both least dangerous and fairest to all concerned.

The question persists, however, concerning the extent to which this casting of philosophy in the role of underlaborer or handmaiden of an essentially mechanistic or nonteleological natural science can promote among the most intellectually adept members of society the requisite devotion either to the principle of reason or to the Lockean regime. Insofar as the desire for foundations frequently overpowers the desire for rational foundations, Locke has reason to believe that many even of his society’s intellectually elite members will espouse some version of his rationalized Christianity or of his workmanship argu-

ment and the principle of common human rational dignity that he associates with either, and that others more secularly inclined but perhaps chastened by his insistent illustrations of the fragility of reason and the grotesque extremes to which fanciful visions of dominion or completion can carry us will find in his utilitarian argument an adequate justification of the same egalitarian principle. Yet just as it strains credulity to suggest that Locke himself is unaware of the intrinsic weaknesses of such arguments, so it is equally implausible to attribute to Locke, who after all is repeatedly compelled by contemporary critics to respond to charges of Hobbesian skepticism and nihilism, the opinion that none of his readers would be cognizant of those weaknesses. And it is further implausible, in view of Locke's great sensitivity to the human mind's susceptibility to disorder, to suggest that he could simply fail to consider the possibility that a few of the most ambitious and intellectually radical of his readers, dissatisfied with the sober, prosaic quality of the Lockean ethic of rational industriousness, would find in his utilitarian relativism or his Baconian harnessing of science to the pursuit of power an implicit invitation to reduce morality and justice to sheer willfulness and thus to formulate new, modern sectarianisms, secular visions of human completion or liberation (cf. *ECHU* 4.4.9).

In part Locke addresses this difficulty by appealing to the very alignment of the desire for truth with practical interest that generates the difficulty. Thus he presents the thought and speech of those occupied with the ordinary affairs of life, even of the ignorant or unschooled, as models for imitation by their supposed intellectual superiors. Just as "ignorant Men . . . can more nicely distinguish [things] from their uses . . . than those learned quick-sighted Men, who look so deep into them," so "Merchants and Lovers, Cooks and Taylors, have Words wherewithal to dispatch their ordinary Affairs; and so, I think, might Philosophers and Disputants too, if they had a Mind to understand, and to be clearly understood" (*ECHU* 3.6.24, 3.11.10; cf. 3.10.8–13; Zuckert [1974], 555–64).

In attempting thus to reinforce the linkage between truth and utility or between rationality and the industrious pursuit of happiness, Locke attempts to raise at least in his nonelite, nonspecialized readers a certain commonsense, pragmatic, moderately anti-intellectualist mistrust with regard to the theoretical wares of professional vendors of ideas. This intention helps explain the vitriolic reductionism that Locke—evidently reaching the limit of the civility, modesty and tolerance that he recommends as conditions of membership in a Lockean commonwealth—deploys against the school philosophers, those willful purveyors of "artificial Ignorance, and *learned Gibberish*" and bringers of "Confusion, Disorder, and Uncertainty into the Affairs of Mankind" (3.10.9,12; 3.10.6–13). As in the *Second Treatise* the threat of armed resistance by a spirited, freedom-loving populace represents the "best Fence" against rebellious would-be tyrants (226), so in the *Essay* a commonsense suspicion that grand legislative moral visions function often as the decent drapery of baser interests

serves to deter Locke's audience from assenting to the domineering designs of a few partisans. Perhaps by propagating a Baconian conception of science or by encouraging the interpretive reduction of thought to interest Locke weakens or removes the moral constraints on willful thought and action for those relative few attentive to the radical implications of that reduction; but if so, then by the same means he also prepares the majority of society's members to recognize assertions of willfulness as such, and consequently to resist them.

But the reduction of opinion to interest in the popular mind is only part, and not the more important part, of Locke's remedy for the mental disease of partisanship. It can only be a partial remedy, both because of the imperfect alignment of interest with justice,¹⁷ and also because interest is in itself an unreliable predictor of human action, insofar as the powerful desire for theoretical or doctrinal foundations all too frequently sweeps people against their fundamental interests into the service of one or another partisan enthusiasm (*ECHU* 1.3.21–27). Once again, our interest in resisting the fanciful, implicitly tyrannical designs of partisans must be reinforced by our pride.¹⁸ In the *Essay*, the schoolmen and other sectarians provoke denunciations similar in spirit to those directed against tyranny in the *Two Treatises*, not only or primarily because their rhetorical obfuscations conceal an antisocial interest, but because their domineering designs constitute an affront to the pride of independent, self-disposing rational beings. The doctrine of a property in oneself, to which we gain an effective title through a sense of respect for our own rational liberty and for the "Dignity and Excellency of a rational Creature" (*STCE* 31), serves as the ultimate guarantor in Locke's political thought of our resistance to partisan schemes. Undeniably, Locke's educational regime involves a certain paradox, in its attempt at forming an independent-minded populace in substantial measure by nurturing its members' love of esteem and therewith their sense of dependence upon their fellows; the members of the Lockean gentry in particular are to be bred to consider themselves estimable insofar as they are rational, self-disposing, self-providing, independent proprietors.

This account of the formation of a popular spirit of independent resistance returns us, however, to the question that Pangle raises concerning the formation of a Lockean intellectual elite. Because a respect for reason or rational liberty is hardly natural, according to Locke, but is instead the product of a subtle but extensive educational regime (cf. Tarcov; Mehta, pp. 119–67), a class of educators is required to transmit across generations and across classes the respect for reason, the linkage of pride with rationality, that is necessary to the health of a Lockean political society. In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* and in other major works as well, Locke offers his services as the educator of educators, although even in this capacity and even in the *Thoughts*, he maintains the reserve that he believes appropriate to a liberal elite.

As with his advice to natural philosophers or scientists, in offering his advice to educators or to those primarily in charge of forming the opinions and

habits fundamental to political morality, Locke presents himself not as an authority or a possessor of completed wisdom, but instead as an underlaborer. In part this means that Locke endeavors to remove the “rubbish” of false moral opinions and pedagogical principles (*ECHU* “Epistle to the Reader,” p. 10); the properly disciplined Lockean understanding disrupts by the harsh light of critical reason the recurring dreams of human completion or finality that enchant our minds and trouble our lives. More affirmatively, it means that Locke shows parents how to habituate their children to a love of rational independence and self-government, while he persuades and exhorts his adult audience similarly to assent to no principle and in particular no moral principle without examination, “the great privilege of finite intellectual Beings,” and thus to conduct their own pursuit of “true and solid” happiness with the care and constancy befitting beings thus privileged (*ECHU* 4.12.4, 2.21.51–52). It is in keeping with the aim of fostering a pride in rational liberty that Locke confines his appeal to persuading and exhorting his readers to the practice of reasoning. Locke acts as a judicious educator by imitating nature as he conceives of it, impressing upon his readers both the necessity and the dignity of a rational life, respecting their rational independence and raising their rational industry by providing only the scattered materials or seeds of arguments pointing toward the nature of human happiness. The political task of the philosophic educator involves the cultivation of reason in nonphilosophers primarily by the limited means of encouraging, and supplying the rationale for the political protection of, their own active, industrious reflection on the nature of a life well lived.

By limiting and obscuring the legislative activity of the philosopher or the rational elite in his constitutional design, Locke may well intend not only to support the independence of the majority of members, but also to preserve the integrity of philosophy itself against the flattering, corrupting temptations associated with ruling others. The forbearance of present gratification required of all members of a Lockean commonwealth (especially *STCE* 38, 106–8) is exemplified at the highest level in the Lockean scientific elite’s disciplined restraint of its will to comprehend and to promulgate the human telos. The fact remains, however, that in requiring a class of educators to transmit a pride in reason or rational liberty, even the Lockean society cannot altogether escape the need for the rule of philosophy or of something closely akin to it, if in a still more indirect manner than that proposed by Platonic political philosophy. In order for a noble lie to serve its purpose effectively, the merit or nobility of the principle it serves must be evident to those cognizant of its literal weaknesses. Insofar as they recognize the theoretical weakness or incompleteness of the various appeals, taken in themselves, whereby Locke seeks to establish in the public mind the legitimacy of the Lockean regime, those expected to propagate such appeals must recognize their deeper, more defensibly philosophical justification, lest those appeals be contemptuously debunked and replaced by more radical, allegedly more coherent ideological constructions. Despite his

visible ostracism of the claim of wisdom to legislative authority—of philosophy in the complete, Platonic sense of the term—Locke is compelled by the logic of his own argument to concern himself with the cultivation, if not of philosophy itself, at least of an intellectual leadership sufficiently philosophic in character to appreciate what dignifies or justifies a pride in human reason and thus makes it worthy of defending against the recurring danger of its collapse into arbitrariness.

Herein lies the ultimate, decisive question for the Lockean experiment. Although Locke clearly intends to preserve a space for religion in the constitutional order he envisions, it is a space for a reformed, rationalized, politically circumscribed religion, a religion whose function is to guide its adherents to a reasonable, mainly secular pursuit of happiness as the proper avenue to salvation (cf. Zuckert [1986]; Rabieh). Seeking to contain its mentally and politically disordering effects, Locke does not treat religion as the serious alternative to reason, energizing and elevating reason by drawing it into a dialogue concerning such ultimate issues as the existence and nature of God, the soul, and the good, and above all by forcing it to scrutinize the worth of the rational life itself. Reason is to acquire its self-awareness and its measure of self-respect, in Locke's design, by setting its sights at least initially on the low rather than the high, on power rather than the good, on happiness or utility rather than excellence (cf. Tarcov, 171–73)—by deriving its initial inspiration from an experimental, mechanistic natural science rather than from a confrontation with religious faith or revelation (cf. Pangle, pp. 274–75). The wisdom or reasonableness of Locke's departure from premodern political philosophy depends ultimately upon the capacity of the non-Socratic means of modern natural science to point beyond its preoccupation with the experimental augmentation of power over nature, to facilitate or engender a more properly Socratic appreciation of the worth of the rational life.

Whatever else he may have in mind, Locke insistently directs the readers of the *Essay* toward technological or power-oriented rather than toward contemplative pursuits (cf. 1.1.5, 2.23.12–13, 4.12.10–12). If it is to avoid succumbing to “the charm of competence” (Strauss [1959], p. 40), lapsing into a state of intoxication by its own unprecedented technological prowess and ultimately losing its ability to conceive of reasoning as anything other than an assertion of power, the Lockean society must preserve a societal consciousness of human limits, rooted in turn in a consciousness among its intellectual leadership of the grounds of the principles of human freedom and dignity that its political and technological power is to serve.

For this reason above all, it is important to recognize that Locke's professions of humility as the animating spirit of the *Essay* (e.g., 1.1.4) are neither fundamentally disingenuous nor inconsistent with a proper pride in reason. In his support of modern natural science and in his critical assessment of its prospects, there persists a certain Socratic element capable of supplying a crucial

basic moral orientation. Within present confines, it is impossible to discuss in detail Locke's complicated critical account of natural science. The point worth emphasizing here, however, is that especially viewed in the light of his ultimate preference of the modern natural scientists to the theologians or the faithful as conversation partners, Locke's repeated emphasis on the inherent limitations of the formers' enterprise carries potentially great significance. Whereas the progressive experimental discovery of the powers inherent in natural substances holds the Baconian promise of enhancing human power to harness the forces of nature, it is at least equally important that insofar as the precise natural essences of things are ultimately unknowable, the powers of natural substances in principle infinite and the uses to which they may be put at best imperfectly conceivable in advance—as the case of “that one contemptible Mineral” iron illustrates (4.12.11; cf. 4.6.11)—Locke's utilitarian rationale for the study of nature necessarily reinforces our awareness of the incompleteness of our knowledge.

The continuation and enhancement of our enjoyment of the benefits of such knowledge as we can acquire depends, in Locke's argument, upon our abiding awareness of the mysteriousness of the whole of being and therewith upon our capacity to resist the temptation to order or reorder our condition in the presumption of the completeness of our knowledge. More affirmatively stated, our continuing enjoyment of the benefits of our knowledge depends upon our capacity to sustain a proper sense of the dignity of our ongoing rational striving within the limits of a condition of “Mediocrity” (4.14.2, 4.12.10) that yields us no final knowledge of nature or creation, but at best partial, experimental knowledge—“partial knowledge of parts,” if in a manner more consistently distrustful of the classical principle of teleology than Plato's Socrates appears to be (cf. Strauss [1953], pp. 120–26; [1964], pp. 19–21). Only through the acceptance and affirmation of the necessity of the life of disciplined striving can we achieve full self-possession. Modern natural science represents in Locke's account that form of power-seeking which, by holding before us the promise of power in and only in reason, best or most safely energizes our rational striving while teaching us a respect for human reason and for the limits of human wisdom and power.

III

If it is appropriate to the nature of the problem that he addresses, it is nonetheless a source of no small difficulty that Locke makes no attempt at demonstrating that the grounding of the culture of his intellectual elite in modern natural science will have the desired pedagogical effect. In the course of the foregoing argument I have tried to show that whereas Locke's defense of a moderately inegalitarian property right holds the key to his attempt at managing

the directly political problem of class division or partisanship, the principle of property in oneself in which that right is grounded amounts to a principle of individual moral self-disposal and therefore requires the partial ostracism or self-concealment of the intellectual leadership of the Lockean society, in particular with respect to its capacity to provide public guidance for the members of that society in their moral reasoning. In insisting upon the partial hiddenness of his intellectual elite, Locke appears to accept as a necessary risk the possibility of licensing a radical and inherently unstable egalitarianism, in the light of which all conceptions of happiness and moral judgments appear equally defensible or indefensible.

Yet Locke provides at least suggestive hints of a broader conception of reason. In making clear his appreciation of the theoretical limitations of modern natural science, in affirming the dignity of reason and maintaining his own genuine devotion to the truth, and in exhorting his readers to the pursuit of true, rational happiness, Locke lays the foundation for an ascent from the narrowly scientific perspective to a fuller, more specifically philosophic reflection on the openness of the human understanding to the ultimate mysteriousness of the order of nature, and on the significance of that openness for guiding and elevating the rational conception and pursuit of happiness. Ever mindful of the need to discipline the mind's errant imaginings, Locke seems to calculate that he does as much as is necessary or prudentially advisable, in preparing but only preparing the way for a continuing reflection on the limits of human science and power, leaving the true legislative task of moral reasoning to the deliberations of individuals in private.

At this point it is difficult to render a definite judgment on the power of the Lockean constitution broadly conceived to preserve its moral foundation against the various forces that threaten to fracture it. One may well sympathize with Locke's assessment of the general practical failure of premodern political thought, with its explicit orientation toward some form of *summum bonum*, to promote political moderation and legitimacy. Yet the very difficulty of the problem Locke sets for himself and the delicacy of his approach to it warrant some doubt concerning his prospects for success over the long term. It requires after all a very subtle, precisely calibrated appeal in part to ostracize and at the same time to cultivate reason, to sustain the soundness of private reasoning about virtue and true happiness while maintaining a general public silence about them. Locke seems to expect the intellectual leadership of the society he envisions to know more, and somehow even to transmit more concerning the true basis of the dignity of human reason than its members are willing unambiguously to *explain* in public. Yet the fact or likelihood of this expectation is itself significant. In view of his resistance to the extreme implications of the modern conventionalist conception of reason that he himself develops in the *Essay*, it appears most likely that Locke is fully aware of the dependence of the health of the modern liberal republic on its preservation of some element of its

premodern inheritance (cf. *STCE* 185–86; also Locke’s 1697 draft letter to the Countess of Peterborough, and “Some Thoughts Concerning Reading and Study for a Gentleman,” *Educational Writings*, pp. 395–96, 399–400).

In the current intellectual climate, marked by a deepening obliviousness of this dependence, the recovery of such an awareness may well require a somewhat more explicit, more forceful expression than Locke believed necessary or prudent in the climate of opinion in which he wrote. At the same time, Locke’s clear appreciation of the dangers of partisan, moralistic enthusiasms should earn him a sympathetic hearing among contemporary liberal audiences. It seems to me that the continuities between the Lockean and premodern traditions of political rationalism deserve our most careful consideration, as we attempt to understand and to address the contemporary manifestations of a problem, the mind’s seemingly constant susceptibility to partisan or irrational devotions, with which Locke was centrally concerned. For the aim of a sound liberalism, as Locke sees it, is not to achieve the liberation of the will or the final, theoretical resolution of the problem of partisanship by perfecting an egalitarian, morally neutral mode of discourse, but instead to nurture effectively the power of reasoning and the respect for it by which alone we become capable of self-government.

NOTES

1. This article is a revised version of a paper presented at the 1993 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association in Washington, D.C. I am grateful to Professor Michael Zuckert for his helpful comments on this paper and to Professor Zuckert and Professor Thomas Engeman for their comments on the larger argument of which this article constitutes a part.

2. I employ the term “constitutionalism” to refer not only or primarily to Locke’s manner of arranging offices or distributing governmental powers, but more broadly to the design according to which he seeks to form and arrange the various elements or classes of people that compose a healthy political society.

3. Citations of Locke’s works will appear as follows. *Of the Conduct of the Understanding* will be cited as *CU*, followed by section number. *The Correspondence of John Locke* will be cited as *CJL*, followed by letter number. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* will be cited as *ECHU*, followed by book, chapter, and paragraph numbers. *A Letter Concerning Toleration* will be cited as *LCT*, followed by page number from the James Tully edition. *Questions Concerning the Law of Nature* will be cited as *LN*, followed by question and page numbers from the edition of Robert Horwitz et al. *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* will be cited as *STCE*, followed by paragraph number. *Two Treatises of Government* will be cited as *TT*, followed by treatise and paragraph numbers. Passages drawn from *The Works of John Locke* will be cited as *Works*, followed by volume and page numbers.

4. Locke introduces this desire abruptly in chapter 5, apparently to mark a transition from one stage of the prepolitical state of nature to another. He suggests that “in the beginning, *before*” this expansive desire “had altered the intrinsic value of things,” the right to appropriate was limited to what one could directly use or consume (II.37, emphasis supplied). Strictly speaking, however, Locke refers to a condition before desire beyond necessity had a specific *effect*, namely the alteration of intrinsic or use values; he makes or implies no comment concerning whether such desire were *present* in the beginning and simply otherwise focused. Similarly, Locke’s reference at II.111

to a golden age seems to mean that in an age of tribal, patriarchal monarchy, antisocial passions were not simply absent, but instead typically directed externally, against other peoples, rather than internally against one's own.

5. "For in every city these two diverse humors are found, which arises from this: that the people desire neither to be commanded nor oppressed by the great, and the great desire to command and oppress the people. From these two diverse appetites one of three effects occurs in cities: principality or liberty or license" (*The Prince* chap. 9, p. 39).

6. In view of Locke's estimate of the power of the expansive, fanciful desires, it appears that Cox exaggerates in ascribing to Locke the opinion that there exists "a discernible natural hierarchy among the desires; the desire for self-preservation . . . is primordial, universally operative, and the most powerful of all desires" (p. 88). Goldwin exaggerates similarly: "The desire for preservation can be diverted, directed, or cajoled, but there is no way to diminish or eradicate its overwhelming power" (p. 484). Were this simply true, the law of nature would be far less "hidden" than it is for Locke (see *LN* 1.111, 2.135, 10.217), and the need for him to write books like the *Two Treatises* much less urgent.

7. Polin (p. 6) compares Locke's conception of property to that of Hegel, observing that property for Locke "is the external manifestation of freedom, its expression and its very concrete existence for others," and not only for others. "Every man, being equal to every other, manifests his liberty by the domination, the ownership of his property" (p. 6). Similarly, for Rapaczynski Lockean "appropriation is the fundamental activity which permits man to overcome his estrangement from the natural environment and to achieve his autonomy" (p. 180). The difficulty in this conception of appropriation, taken to its extreme, is implicit in Strauss's observation that labor, for Locke as for Hegel, "is a negative attitude toward nature" (1953, p. 250).

8. The general thrust of MacPherson's reading as well as his employment of the term "possessive" to describe Lockean individualism appears to carry this connotation. Yet even MacPherson explains that he refers fundamentally to a doctrine of possession of *self* or of individual autonomy (p. 3). Contrast also Fukuyama's only mildly qualified objections to the spiritlessness of Anglo-Saxon liberalism (especially pp. xvii, 153–61, 186–95).

9. "God and his Reason commanded [Man] to subdue the Earth, *i.e.* improve it for the benefit of Life, and therein lay out something upon it that was his own, his labour" (II.32; also 34, 35). Locke's ambiguous argument in the *First Treatise* that charity, if not justice, accords the needy a "Right" to another's surplus (42) implies that the destitute have in the extremity of their condition a right to theft or even robbery. Natural necessity or the natural condition of "penury" (32; cf. 35, 37) confers upon us not only the right but also the obligation to labor productively, in order to lay the foundation of justice or civil concord by eliminating the need for charity in either its traditional or Lockean variant. Cf. Strauss (1953), p. 239n., and Pangle, p. 144. Contrast Dunn (1968).

10. See especially *ECHU* 4.12.12: "*The Study of Nature* . . . if rightly directed, may be of greater benefit to Mankind, than the Monuments of exemplary Charity, that have at so great Charge been raised, by the Founders of Hospitals and Alms-houses. . . ." This emphasis in the *Essay* and the *Two Treatises* on the technological overcoming of the need for charity represents Locke's resolution of the problem of scarcity that he had formulated in the early *Questions Concerning the Law of Nature*, 11.245–49.

11. See *STCE* 207; *Works* 5.54, 64, 72, 163; *CJL* No. 1693, January 19, 1694; King, pp. 97–98. Wood observes aptly that in "Locke's vocabulary, labor, industry, perseverance, sobriety, and usefulness replaced aristocratic honor, pride, dignity, spirit, and the non-utilitarian" (1983, p. 148; also p. 128).

12. Locke directs such an appeal also to those adults who are animated by the highest ambition or the most profound desire for dominion, suggesting that that "Prince" who secures "protection and encouragement to the honest industry of Mankind against the oppression of power and the narrowness of Party," not only "will quickly be too hard for his neighbours," but in preserving a truly legitimate government—especially by prerogative power, at times when legitimacy is most vulnerable and arbitrary absolutism therefore most inviting—would earn the highest distinction and esteem, becoming the "wise and godlike" bearer of "true Power and Honour" (II.42, 111, 166).

13. "Laurels and Honours," Locke takes care to affirm, "are always justly due to the Valour of those who venture their Lives for their Country" (*STCE* 115). In his diary entry of December 12, 1678, he remarks on the power of this desire to make "the Hurons and other people of Canada with such constancy endure such unexpressible torments" (in *Educational Writings*, p. 153n.). See Horwitz, pp. 136–41.

14. Such is the great fear of Burke, of course, who sees in the French revolutionaries an intoxicated lust for innovation for its own sake, a radically negative, destructive willfulness that is the direct consequence of the theoretical doctrine of natural freedom as pure negation or indeterminacy (*Reflections on the Revolution in France*, *passim*). The failure to take fully seriously the naturalness of the ills of the state of nature accounts for the partiality in the reading of Locke as a teacher of individual moral autonomy. In his otherwise admirable attempt at revealing a genuinely moral dimension of Locke's thought, Rapaczynski tends, for instance, to underemphasize Locke's concern with our natural alienation from other human beings, not merely from nonhuman nature, and thus to underemphasize the essentially defensive character of Locke's political thought (pp. 9, 113–217). The basic difficulty in this reading lies in the fact that an unmixed emphasis on the aim of pure moral, that is, individual autonomy would ultimately undermine any limitations on the assertions of individual wills, and thus exacerbate precisely those natural ills that the Lockean regime is intended to overcome. Cf. note 7 above.

15. Locke supplies the basis for pushing this process of reduction still further, in suggesting that the passions themselves are further reducible to the status of simple ideas or sensations, thus implying the radical malleability of the desires and the possibility in principle, through a grand, comprehensive scheme of education or re-education, of resolving once and for all the partisan differences among humankind (cf. *ECHU* 2.20 with 2.21.45–46, 69; also 3.9.18–19). As Pangle acknowledges, however, Locke makes this suggestion only tentatively and does not pursue its extreme implications (pp. 212–14).

16. Cf. Hobbes's attempt at formulating the rules or laws of nature in a manner "intelligible, even to the meanest capacity" (*Leviathan* 15, p. 214).

17. Surely Locke is aware that although his "Merchants and Lovers" in particular may have an interest in communicating clearly in order to get what they want from others, their interest could as easily move them to communicate untruth as truth. In such cases the attachment of interest to the cause of truthfulness depends upon the vigilance of those with whom one communicates—even including oneself, if it be true that certain forms of felt interest lead us often enough to deceive ourselves. Such is the limited utility of Locke's appeal to interest.

18. On the interplay between pride and interest in American constitutionalism, see Mansfield (1991), especially chapters 6 and 7.

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