

# LOCKE, MORALITY, AND THE PRAGMATIC GROUND OF POLITICS

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*The paper argues that John Locke's 'Theory of government justification' (TGJ) is grounded on a consistent moral account. This is shown by reconstructing such an account through textual analysis of The Essays on the Law of Nature, The Essay Concerning Human Understanding, and the Two Treatises of Government. The first two parts of the paper show that the account of morality that can be traced throughout Locke's works fulfills the desiderata of 1) normative strength and 2) motivational effectiveness by way of being at the same time both deontic and naturalistic. The third part introduces an epistemological objection that seriously compromises the success of Locke's project but argues that it is not fatal to it.*

*Keywords: Deontic morality, Government justification, John Locke, Moral epistemology, Natural law, Natural morality, Natural rights, Voluntarism*

## INTRODUCTION

The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the robustness of John Locke's theory of government justification, given its basis in a consistent moral theory. This sheds new light on the overall strength of his political theory and the interconnectedness of his philosophical works. This is not only of interest within the history of political philosophy but also provides new opportunities for those interested in thinking about political philosophy outside the mainstream.

Over the last four decades, political philosophy has worked with the assumption that civil government cannot be grounded in a substantive account of morality, an idea said to have originated from early modern social contract theorists such as Locke. However, showing that this assumption is not true, at least for John Locke, can enhance our understanding of the possibilities available to political philosophers. While this does not mean that political philosophers should simply adopt Locke's ideas, revisiting his work through new understandings can provide resources to enhance the toolbox of the trade.

By 'Locke's theory of government justification' (TGJ), I refer to Locke's (T2 §111; §136 and §230) theory on the origin and justification of government based on

public consent and its functions and limits as determined by the defense of rights. The argument is presented in three steps, with the first two developing the positive case and the last one addressing the strongest objection it might face.

The first step shows that Locke's TGJ is grounded on a deontic morality, as it relies on a theory of pre-political law and rights. The second step argues that such a theory is *naturalistic* and needs to be so, in order to be a robust foundation for his TGJ. The two main components of Locke's deontic morality, natural law, and natural rights, are shown to be pre-political in a foundational sense *pragmatically* but not as a matter of necessity. The next section defends that such a morality is normatively strong because it is grounded on God's voluntarism. Then I argue that it is motivationally effective; it can motivate obedience from human beings because the teleological idea that underlies the voluntaristic rules within Locke's moral account are made coherent by their constituting laws of convenience. From the above, it follows that his moral account is robust because it is, on the one hand, both naturalistic and normatively strong and, on the other, both deontic and motivationally effective.

The following section argues that Locke's notion of morality is normatively strong because it is based on God's voluntarism. It is then suggested that it is motivationally effective, given that the teleological conception underlying Locke's moral account is made coherent by the fact that it constitutes laws of convenience. Therefore, his moral account is robust because it is both naturalistic and normatively strong, as well as deontic and motivationally effective.

The preceding conclusions give rise to an objection that is addressed in the final section: there does not seem to be a way in which Locke's moral theory could be known by human beings. Locke's account appears to be presented from a god's-eye perspective that would only be accessible to human beings through religious revelation. However, if the revelation was the epistemic justification that Locke gave to his morality, then it would fail to provide the robust grounding for his TGJ that I claim it does. I argue that an answer to this objection can be reconstructed from Locke's works.

The claims made in the paper are supported by reconstructing and analyzing the arguments presented in Locke's three most relevant works on the topic: *The Essays on the Law of Nature (ELN)*, *The Essay Concerning Human Understanding (E)*, and *The Two Treatises of Government (T)*. The reconstruction of his arguments is primarily based on those explicitly stated in the works. However, it is sometimes necessary to work with arguments that are only implied while still remaining faithful to Locke's thought.

## THE FOUNDATION OF CIVIL SOCIETY ON A DEONTIC AND NATURALISTIC MORALITY

Locke's TGJ can only be made coherent and consistent through the inclusion of the notions of a *pre-political* and *natural* law, as well as pre-political and natural rights. By "pre-political," I mean "previous to the establishment of civil society." Such

precedence is not only chronological but also foundational. By "natural," I mean "not humanly created." For what is humanly created, I use the term "artificial."

### The Moral Ground of Civil Societies

Locke's theory of government can be read as entirely dependent on his account of pre-political law and rights, both chronologically and foundationally. This dependence can be demonstrated through an analysis of his notions of the state of nature and the state of war. First, it must be shown that the foundational aspect of pre-political law and rights derives from their status as moral concepts in the state of nature, which is the situation in which human societies existed prior to the formation of civil society. Second, through an examination of Locke's concept of the state of war, we can see that pre-political law and rights retain their moral status even after the formation of civil society because, for Locke, civil society is merely a practical implementation of a system designed to ensure the fulfillment of public morality.

Throughout the section, I refer to what Locke calls the "law of nature" and "natural rights" as pre-political law and rights. This terminology is justified even when discussing already formed civil societies since they are founded upon and justified by the moral character of such law and rights.

For Locke (T2 §3), the *state of nature* is the "State all Men are naturally in" before the conformation of civil society. I use the term "civil society" to refer to what Locke discusses in different places, also under the terms "commonwealth" or "body politic": the group of people living together under a common authority that is justified by the consent of the people (see E IV.iii.18). Locke presents the state of nature as the condition in which men are naturally in. He describes it as a situation in which men possess "perfect Freedom" regarding the order of their actions and the disposal of their possessions. However, he (T2 §4) then presents a limitation for such freedom "within the bounds of the Law of Nature."

Humans in the state of nature do not obey the laws of human authority. However, there is a law that they must obey: the law of nature, the pre-political law. He (T2 §7) claims that the execution of this law in the state of nature is in "every Man's hands." For him (T2 §7), in the state of nature, people are found in a situation of perfect equality and enjoy pre-political rights (life, liberty, health, and property) whose respect is commanded by the law.

As John Simmons (1992, 70) has pointed out, Locke never gives "anything like a definition of rights." When looking for such a definition, he points out, the closest one might get is by looking at the *Essays on the Law of Nature*, where Locke's (1958, p.111) claim is that a right hangs on the fact that "we have free use of a thing." In the *First Treatise* (§67), he mentions that every person "ought to partake in the same common rights and privileges." In the *Second Treatise* (§87), he states that every man has "a title to perfect freedom and uncontrolled enjoyment of all the rights and privileges of the law of nature." Following these kinds of remarks within Locke's works around the notion of rights, it can be affirmed that for Locke, rights are entitlements or privileges to something.

By contrast, the notion of law and what falls into it is dealt with thoroughly in many parts of Locke's works. Within the *Essays on the Law of Nature* themselves, he (1958, p.117) defines the law as "that which prescribes to everything the form and manner and measure of working." Its proper function is to lay down "what is and what is not to be done" (p.111). Locke in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1975, I.iv.8, IV.iii.18), explains that the notion of law involves the notions of obligation and duty, what must be done, a set of rules that "require Conformity" to them.

The state of nature, according to Locke, is not regulated by self-interest as it is in the Hobbesian state of nature. Instead, it is regulated by a pre-political law that dictates human conduct. This law sets the moral rules for actions that involve and affect other people, which I will refer to as "communal morality." As Richard Ashcraft (1987, 46) has pointed out, Locke's notion of morality is based on the assumption of "collective responsibility" that all people have towards each other. The law also applies to personal morality, which concerns the personal, rather than social, dimension of human action. However, in this work, the impact of natural law on personal morality will not be considered, as I find that for Locke, civil society is based only on the communal aspect of morality.

According to Simmons (1992, 7), Locke's morality includes not only the deontic part but also a virtue theory that has been largely overlooked and requires further study to fully understand Locke's moral theory. While this may be the case, I would argue that the portion of Locke's morality that is relevant to politics is the one that concerns rights and duties as norms governing interpersonal relationships - in other words, communal morality. It has also been suggested that Locke's morality cannot be classified as deontic since he changed his mind and ultimately defended a hedonistic account of morality that is incompatible with a deontic position. This objection will be addressed in the next section.

One of the most controversial questions among Lockean commentators is the role the state of nature plays in Locke's theory. According to Ashcraft (1987, 95ss), the notion of the state of nature serves three purposes within Locke's theory. Firstly, it describes a moral condition that characterizes the "natural life" of individuals. Secondly, it is used to describe specific instances in history in which individuals or countries have been (or are) in order to provide some understanding of the empirical sociological situation of human societies before the institution of governments. Thirdly, Locke uses it to introduce the very specific set of "institutions and practices" through which civil government is established.

According to Martin Seliger and John Dunn, the state of nature is not meant to illustrate a historical situation but only a moral one. Seliger (1969, 82-3) claims that the state of nature is a "hypothesis" or an "interpretative device," an abstraction of men from a political organization (or civil society) in order to illustrate their nature and rights "qua men" and their faculties and abilities concerning the knowledge and applicability of natural law. Dunn (1969, 68; 111) has denied the historical character of the state of nature on the grounds that Locke was concerned with the problem of the legitimacy of the civil government of his day, not the "prehistoric origin" of that

legitimacy. Such a notion, he argues, is used by Locke to define the "continuing moral order within which human beings live and make their history."

The various functions of the state of nature that have been argued for do have their place under a close reading of Locke's texts. The state of nature is meant to depict the pre-political situation of human beings, both chronologically and foundationally. Ashcraft's support for the historical and sociological role (chronological) of the state of nature within certain parts of Locke's political theory is based on the examples Locke provides of human communities living in the state of nature. Some of his (T2, §102) examples are indeed historical in nature, such as his discussion of the situation prior to the establishment of Rome. Others portray the sociological conditions of people living together without allegiance to a common human authority, such as his (§102) example of the Indians living in America at his time who, he believed, had no government at all.

However, the most important role that the notion of the state of nature plays within Locke's TGJ is to establish that morality takes precedence over politics. It constitutes the foundation of politics and gives political power its normative force. For Locke, pre-political rights and pre-political law are primarily moral concepts, even when they are regulated by political society. This will become more evident in the following sections.

Let us now provide the argument that the primary idea within Locke's TGJ is that civil government serves as a tool for implementing morality. It provides a pragmatic solution to the threat that the state of war poses to individual rights and the fulfillment of duties. Pre-political rights and the pre-political law, introduced as moral concepts in the state of nature, maintain their moral status even after being protected and regulated by the established government. Consequently, ultimate moral accountability within a political society remains on the individual agents living within it.

Locke (T2 §13) acknowledges that the fact that the executive power of the pre-political law within the state of nature is in the hands of every man gives rise to certain problems. Due to self-love, men might be "partial to themselves and their Friends." Additionally, they might be moved by "ill-nature, passion, and revenge" to impose punishments that do not correspond to the offense. This ultimately results in the use of force against other people when one does not have the right to do so. Locke (T2 §232) refers to this situation as the "state of war."

These inconveniences of the state of nature that lead (or might lead) to the state of war give rise to civil society, according to Locke (T2 §14), through the people's 'agreeing together mutually to enter into one community and make one body politick.' They agree, Locke (T2 §95) claims, to elect a common and impartial judge to arbitrate in cases of rights transgression. By complying with this agreement, a person forfeits his "natural liberty" and places it "on the bonds of civil society" with the aim of ensuring a peaceful and comfortable life within the society.

In this society, the protection of his pre-political rights and the ability to fulfill his moral duties are best guaranteed. The established government is simply a practical or pragmatic resource, an instrument designed to assist every individual in fulfilling their moral duties without the constant threat posed by the state of war. In this sense, a

civil society is, for Locke (T2 §163), "a society of rational creatures entered into a Community for their Natural Good."

The fact that an individual surrenders her liberty in the state of nature only means, in practical terms, that she should abstain from arbitrating matters of rights herself and instead trust the government. However, each citizen maintains her natural rights. This ultimately justifies a just revolution against a government that transgresses the rights of individuals. As a result, ultimate moral accountability does not rely on the state but on the citizens. As Locke (Letter 2320 cited in Goldie 1997, xiii) wrote in a letter to Lady Peterborough, "True politics" are simply "a part of moral philosophy [...] the art of conducting men right in society".

This justification of civil government as a pragmatic solution to the threat posed by the state of war is supported, but not actively endorsed, by a number of Locke's commentators. For example, Seliger (1968, 72; 74; 82) hints at this when he claims that the necessity for a political society would be inexplicable if the state of nature were a situation completely devoid of "war-like tensions" that allowed for natural law to be fully observed. Individuals are introduced in the state of nature as morally defective, which gives rise to the necessity of applying natural law through the intermediacy of government. Dunn (1969, 110-111) describes the state of war. as a situation resulting from "human wickedness" and civil government as a "response of human intelligence" to that wickedness. Finally, Ashcraft (1987, 54) underlines that Locke's political theory is the result of a combination of moral philosophy and prudential judgments, a mixture of the knowledge we have about morality and the "practical necessities of life."

### **Locke's Natural Account of Morality**

The argument has been made that Locke's TGI depends on his notions of a pre-political law and a set of pre-political rights. Furthermore, the relevant sense in which they are pre-political is not chronological but foundational-- that legitimate civil government is grounded on Locke's deontic morality. Let us now show that pre-political law and rights need to conform to a *natural* account of morality for Locke's theory to be coherent. The discussion of the particular type of "naturalness" that is used in Locke's moral theory and its relevance to his justification of government is left to the next section.

The argument will be divided into two parts. The first part will discuss three possible combinations of naturalness and artificiality within Locke's deontic theory. The second part will provide an argument for why none of these combinations can support Locke's theory. Finally, a fourth possibility will be presented, which is the one that Locke actually uses, and this will be explained in terms of how it benefits his justification of government.

It can be argued that the concepts of pre-political law and pre-political rights form a moral code that justifies the protection of civil society. However, accepting this argument does not necessarily require accepting Locke's claim that these components (law and rights) are natural. Three alternative possibilities can be proposed:

- 1) One could defend a Hobbesian state of nature, in which neither the pre-political moral norm nor the pre-political rights are natural.
- 2) Alternatively, one could propose a moral model that combines both natural and artificial components, in which the law is natural, but the rights are humanly created,
- 3) or vice versa.

However, I contend that neither of these options is consistent with Locke's theory.

The first scenario posits that not only is civil government the result of a human contract, but so too are the pre-political rights and law that justify its existence. Hobbes presents the best example of this argument in the *Leviathan* (I.xii and I.xiv): in the state of nature, humans are not bound by any law that would forbid them from using their own power as they see fit for their own self-preservation and self-interest. As a result, 'Right and Wrong, Justice and Injustice' have 'no place.' However, this creates chaos that goes against the self-interest of everyone. In order to address this, the best solution is for everyone to agree on a common code of public morality that establishes a set of human rights and a law that must be respected.

However, this possibility is not consistent with Locke's justification of government. It appears that the best situation for all is a matter of empirical investigation, which undermines Locke's argument. There is no guarantee that people will choose that option, as some individuals may have more power than others and may prefer a different option. If both law and rights are artificial, they risk being arbitrary, and any resulting government would not necessarily be justified in the way Locke intended. Instead, it would be justified according to the factual circumstances of the state of nature, merely understood as a historical reality.

A second scenario is one where rights are artificial creations made to fulfill pre-political law. In this case, the law itself would not command anything in relation to the rights but would only contain what Locke (*T2* §7 and §135) defines as the fundamental law of nature: to care for oneself and others' lives, as long as it does not interfere with self-preservation. An argument could be made for each of the rights that Locke puts forward as to how upholding them relates to fulfilling the fundamental law of nature. In this case, the rights would be an artificial tool, just like the civil government used to guarantee the fulfillment of the law of nature.

However, if this were the case, there would be no logical requirement stemming from the pre-political law that rights, let alone the precise rights that Locke has in mind, are derived from it. The law might mandate something broader that could be fulfilled through rights or something else entirely.

Respect for the fundamental principle of natural law can be achieved through other political means. A protective framework could be established that, while limiting freedom, still safeguards our own lives and those of others, even if it enslaves them or ourselves. However, according to Locke, the government's responsibility is explicitly to protect rights, not any contingently chosen method of fulfilling the law. Therefore, both the means and the ends must have a non-artificial (i.e., natural) status.

The third scenario involves a situation opposite to the previous one. In this case, the rights are natural, but the law that enforces them is artificial. While it can be argued

that human beings have certain entitlements to certain goods or situations, it does not necessarily imply that others have a duty to protect such rights. In such a situation, rights would be completely limitless, and the creation of laws would be even more difficult than in the first scenario. This is because now, the decisions of individuals engaging in a contract are backed not only by self-interest but also by a legitimate claim to some entitlements. Whenever there is a clash of rights between people, not even self-interest would seem to be enough to settle the issue because rights would apparently have the preeminence.

So far, three possibilities for the origin of pre-political morality have been shown to be incoherent with Locke's justification for civil government. A fourth possibility is yet to be explored: that both pre-political law and pre-political rights are natural and complementary to each other. Note that it is also possible for both rights and the law to be natural but unrelated. As previously stated, it is not necessary for the law to mandate respect for rights. The reason why there is a compatibility between rights and the law is explained below.

The legitimacy of the contract is, for Locke (T2 §95), based on people's right to freedom. The right and duty of individuals to defend their own rights is the foundation for citizens to delegate this task to the government. Any theory of rights that is artificially created cannot robustly account for this, as it could justify and create responsibilities for any type of government, not the ones Locke aimed to defend. As John Colman (1983, 30) has argued, "[w]ithout the law of nature, the government of society would be completely arbitrary." Although the government could use brutal force to compel authority, it couldn't impose any obligation. Locke had already glimpsed this early in his life when he lectured on the law of nature in Oxford. Locke (1958, 189) believed that "[i]f natural law is not binding on men, neither can any human positive law be binding," given that the binding force of the latter is dependent on the binding force of the former.

In this sense, Seliger (1968, 69) correctly emphasizes that "consent must remain subject to natural law because the right of individuals to consent to particularizations of natural law emanates from that law." Greg Forster (2005, 4) also accurately notes that if the legitimacy of government is grounded only on the empirical fact of popular adherence and agreement on some topics, such as individual liberty, where there is no moral theory to sustain that public adherence, "popular consensus in favor of such principles will inevitably erode over time."

## **NORMATIVITY AND MOTIVATION IN LOCKE'S MORAL ACCOUNT**

In the previous section, it was argued that Locke's T&G ultimately depends on his naturalistic morality, which is composed of the notions of natural rights and natural law. In the following paragraphs, I reconstruct the metaphysical account that supports his morality and argue that such an account provides a sound basis for it. For Locke's natural account of pre-political law and rights to constitute a robust justification of civil government, it needs to fulfill two desiderata: a) it must be



*normatively strong*, and b) it must be *motivationally effective*. I first demonstrate how his naturalistic morality is normatively strong by presenting the theocentric theory on which he grounds such normativity. Then, I argue that Locke's moral account can be motivationally effective by showing how his voluntarist account of God as the lawmaker is meant to be coherent with the order of the world and thus provides a motive for human action by constituting a law of convenience.

### **The Theistic Normativity Behind Natural Rights and Natural Law**

For Locke's moral account to serve as a robust foundation for TGJ, it must be normatively strong. This means that the pre-political law must prescribe human conduct and be justified in its prescriptive power. Naturalistic theories face the challenge of deriving normativity from factual statements, which is avoided in Locke's theory by grounding it on theological voluntarism. This is achieved by God dictating the law and establishing norms of conduct. I first explain how this helps Locke establish the prescriptive nature of the law of nature and then why humans are subject to it.

According to Locke (*ELN* p.111 and 173, E, I.iii.12), for a statement to be considered a law, it must come from a lawmaker. It is the power and authority of the lawmaker that grants the law its prescriptive character. A mere description of facts cannot serve as the origin of a norm. Therefore, what matters in the concept of the Lawmaker is that the law's origin must be that it is dictated as such. Its prescriptive character comes from being "the decree of a superior will."

In Locke's (*ELN* p.187, also *E* I.iii.13) works, God is the lawmaker of natural law, and this is what makes it obligatory "of itself and by its intrinsic force." God is also the origin of natural rights and of human beings themselves. As argued in the previous section, it is not the case that law and rights are derived from one another in any sense. Moreover, it is not the case that rights or law are derived from human essence, in the sense that how humans should act and what they can legitimately claim is not derived from how or what they are.

The source of authority for natural rights and natural law is not their naturalness if that implies that obligations and legitimate claims can be derived merely from the description of human nature. According to Locke, all of this comes directly from God's power and authority. Even the authority of one person over another, as Dunn (1969, 127) notes, comes from God's authority. Humans have duties and rights simply because God has willed it so. Because the moral 'ought' is entirely dependent on God's will, Colman (1983, 43) classifies Locke as a 'theological voluntarist.' Foster (2005, 14) also supports this position.

This metaphysical standpoint for Locke's account allows him then to claim that rights and law are natural without having the problem that a non-theistic account of natural rights and natural law has to solve: the problem of deriving an ought from an is. As Colman has underlined, it is '[a]n obvious advantage' of Locke's moral account 'that it gives a definite content to the concept of a moral 'ought' when it is not clear what the meaning of the moral 'ought' is in theories that do not follow a legalist account of morality where moral rules 'are considered as laws promulgated by a *de jure* authority.' Reason, he argues, could perhaps make rules that indicate 'valuable or

desirable lines of conduct,' but it cannot establish the demand these rules must be followed (1983, 72).

Locke's metaphysical standpoint allows him to claim that rights and law are natural without facing the problem of deriving an ought from an is, which is a challenge for non-theistic accounts of natural law and natural rights. As Colman (1983, 72) emphasized, Locke's moral account has the advantage of providing a clear meaning to the concept of a moral "ought," unlike theories that do not follow a legalist account of morality, where moral rules "are considered as laws promulgated by a *de jure authority*." While reason can establish rules that indicate "valuable or desirable lines of conduct," it cannot mandate compliance with these rules.

One could argue that if the origin of law and rights is God, then there is no reason to refer to them as pre-political or natural. They could simply be called *divine*. As Seliger (1968, 34) has suggested, introducing God weakens "the naturalistic character of his teachings." However, Locke manages to reconcile the notion of a divinely mandated law and rights with their naturalness in a certain way, which will be discussed further on.

According to Locke's theory, God is the lawgiver and, therefore, responsible for creating a set of normative propositions that constitute the law. His status as God (as omnipotent, omniscient etc.) does not add anything significant to his ability to dictate the law, as any rational being could do the same. The reason his commands are relevant is that he has authority over those to whom he is dictating. In Locke's theory, God's authority over us comes from the Christian concept of God as a creator. God created both humans and the world, so humans are his creation and thus subject to his commands. Locke (*ELN*, 185) claims that as the *creator*, God has authority, and it is the responsibility of the creature to obey because "all things are justly subject to that by which they have first been made." Therefore, for Locke (T2 §6), God's law binds human beings because they are his "workmanship."

Locke (*E* II.xxviii.8) links the creature's duty to obey the creator with the creator's right to be obeyed. According to many Lockean scholars, this "right of creation" is the ultimate explanation for the binding power that the law of nature has over human beings. In this sense, Colman (1983, 46) has referred to the right of creation as "the keystone" of Locke's moral account. Similarly, Simmons (1992, 99) and Dunn (1969, 94) have argued for this claim.

However, there is another aspect of Locke's theory that complements the idea that the right of creation is the reason why the law is binding for human beings. This is the fact that, as the creator, God has full knowledge of what is best for human beings. He designed their nature and knows what is best for it. Therefore, the law created by God is convenient for humans, and this convenience is better than any law designed by human powers because God knows better what is Good, that is, convenient for humans, according to what they are.

In order to defend this, it is necessary to argue that what God orders is actually in the best interest of humans. If it were not so, then it would not be efficiently obeyed. In other words, the right and the good converge within Locke's theory. If this were not

true, free rational creatures would have no duty to obey God. The duty only follows from the fact that it is good in the first place.

### **The Reconciliation of the Right and the Good within Locke's Moral Theory**

Even if, in Locke's deontic moral account, normativity stems from God's will rather than from natural facts, his account can still be considered a naturalistic theory. This is because the law of nature not only prescribes how humans should behave but also reflects the actions that are most consistent with human nature. Similarly, the notion of rights is coherent with what humans are, even though they are granted by God's will. If God were to dictate laws and rights that were completely alien to human beings, they would not be effective because humans would not accept them as laws.

Moreover, while naturalistic accounts generally face the so-called 'is-ought problem,' deontic accounts need to justify why agents have a reason to act according to the law (see, for example, Williams 1993). Locke's deontic morality avoids this problem and is motivationally effective because the set of right actions according to the law converges with what is good for human beings or leads to the achievement of such good.

Wolfgang Von Leyden and Mark Goldie have suggested that there is a tension within Locke's theory between the voluntarist account, which he presents as the origin of the law of nature, and some strands of intellectualism that appear in his work. Von Leyden ('Introduction' to the *ENL*, 1958 p.51) phrases it as the law having its foundation "in the essential nature of things, and is thus independent of the will." According to Goldie (1997, xx), Locke tries to provide a middle way in a Suarezian style by considering God "not only powerful but also wise," presenting God's will as "regulated by wisdom and goodness," even when his fundamental position was voluntarist.

Colman (1983, 30-1) has also argued that there would be a problem if it is thought that Locke is trying to present the law of nature as both prescribing human action and describing human nature. Colman attempts to resolve this tension in Locke's theory by suggesting that the naturalness of the law only means that it can be naturally known. However, it goes beyond that and agrees with what is good for human nature.

Locke's natural law theory has a strength in that it involves a convergence between the right and the good. As seen in the previous section, the law of nature is a set of rules for human conduct; it defines what the right action is. The prescriptive character of natural law is only a part of it. Natural law does not only impose regulations for human conduct but also constitutes a principle of order for the entire universe. However, when regulating human affairs, it takes on a particular shape. In this case, it presents itself as twofold to humans due to their rational faculties. Everything else in the world necessarily follows the dictates of the law, but humans have rational abilities that give them freedom. Locke (*E* II.xxi.12. See also II.xxi.21-28) understands freedom as the power to put an action on hold and decide what to do, to "begin or forbear, continue or end" the actions in mind. This is why natural law takes the shape of a code of conduct for humans.

However, the general structure of natural law is the same for humans as it is for all other things. It serves as a blueprint for achieving the good that corresponds to each thing. This idea is based on Locke's teleology, which holds that everything that exists has a purpose. As Aristotle had previously argued, fulfilling that purpose ultimately constitutes the good of something.

Based on the structure of natural law, it can be argued that Locke sees coherence in God's roles as both creator and lawgiver. God's laws direct things towards fulfilling the purpose for which they were created or towards the means of fulfilling that purpose. It's possible that God created things with a specific purpose or way of fulfilling their purpose but then ordered them to do something irrelevant or even self-destructive. Only humans, as rational beings, have the ability to disobey the law and act in a self-destructive manner.

In Locke's theory, God appears as a coherent voluntarist because he made the right action, dictated by his law, coincide with what is good for the creatures he created. It could very well have been otherwise. The right action, as per God's legislation, might direct us to do things that are bad for us. As Locke recognized in the *Essays on the Law of Nature* (p.215) utility is not the basis of the law or the ground of obligation. However, it does constitute a consequence of obedience to the law of nature. This makes the law motivationally effective for rational creatures in the world.

Ultimately, for Locke, what makes men fulfill their duties towards the law of nature is not duty's sake. Rather, what makes them accept this law is a realization that obeying it constitutes what is good for them. The law merely commands what is in their best interest and what they really want. As Colman (1983, 69; 74) has explained, for Locke, there is no good "intrinsically related to morality" unless that good is understood in an instrumental sense: moral norms are good insofar as they are means for a non-moral good, human happiness.

An objection might be raised against the general structure of this claim, namely that the problem is simply being moved to another place. It may appear that men have a duty to do what is good for them, and this would need to be defended. However, it can be argued that doing what is good for them is not something that men have a duty to do but rather what they inherently seek when they act. Locke holds this latter view.

### **Reinterpreting Locke's Hedonistic Account of Morality**

It has been explained that natural law only motivates us to act insofar as we follow it for convenience. However, to support this claim, one must show that we actually behave in this manner, i.e., that we obey the law for convenience's sake rather than out of a sense of duty. Let us analyze his discussion of pleasure and pain in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* to demonstrate that this is indeed Locke's position.

In the *Essay*, Locke (*E* I.iii.12) presents what could be called 'Locke's theory of action.' He argues that two basic ideas, pleasure, and pain, prompt human beings into action. These ideas constitute the principle that "upon all occasions, excites and directs the actions of all men." Humans are motivated to seek pleasure and avoid pain.

Locke (*E* II.xxi.29) further explains this concept through the notion of 'uneasiness,' which is a feeling of displeasure in the current situation that "works on the Mind to put it upon Action."

Some scholars of Locke have suggested that what he is presenting in this chapter is a theory of morality. They argue that Locke is conveying that pleasure is what should be sought, and pain is what should be avoided, and that this ultimately constitutes a hedonistic position that is completely incompatible with his natural law theory (see, for example, Seliger 1968, 34). As a result, Locke's moral attempts are considered a failure. John Marshall (1994, xx) has declared that Locke never wrote a book of ethics because "he could not see how to fully integrate his hedonistic and deontic accounts of morality.

Other Lockean commentators have attempted to reconcile passages of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* with his natural law morality by interpreting them as Locke's theory of motivation. In other words, pleasure and pain are not what ought to be sought, but they are what actually motivate human beings to act. Colman (1983, 68-9) explains that ideas of pleasure and pain are principles that move the agent and give them reasons to act, but "they are hardly moral." As Goldie (1997, xxii) has pointed out, knowledge of the existence of the law of nature within Locke's theory does not alone "solve the problem of motivation and obedience." Colman (1983, 49) has claimed that "The rectitude of an action consists in its conformity to the law of nature," but the "acknowledgment of an obligation" is not sufficient to motivate the agent. Therefore, since Locke does not view having an obligation in terms of there being a reason for the agent to do it, he needs to supplement his deontic morality with a coherent theory of action. This is the purpose of his study of pleasure and pain within the *Essay*.

This interpretation seems in line with Locke's works to the extent that for Locke (*E* IV.xxi.3), the purpose of the science of morality is to guide people toward their happiness. Therefore, if his deontic theory of motivation alone does not explain how human beings achieve this happiness, he does appear to supplement it with an account of human motivation. It seems reasonable to conclude that his discussion of pleasure and pain serves to provide such an account.

It should be remembered that Locke's main purpose in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* was to analyze the extent and limits of human knowledge. Initially, we experience pleasure and pain because our first type of knowledge is sensory, and we are driven to seek out the former and avoid the latter. However, Locke also includes a theory of reflection that allows us to reach ideas that are not solely based on sensory input. This reflection enables humans to move beyond mere sensory pleasure and pursue other conveniences.

As Goldie (1997, xiii) has noted, for Locke, pleasure and pain are "the strings of human action," and "nobody is to be condemned for seeking pleasure," but only for favoring some pleasures over others, given that Locke believes we have "good apparent motives" to act in accordance with the law of nature. However, what remains true is that individuals act for their own convenience, even if not solely based on sensory considerations, because they are capable of doing so.

## LOCKE'S MORAL EPISTEMOLOGY

The most significant objection to accepting Locke's deontic account of morality as a robust foundation for his TGJ is epistemic in nature. The naturalistic account he provides appears to be only known from a God's-eye perspective. In other words, God knows how he created what he created and what he ordered it to do. However, it is not clear how human beings could have or acquire such knowledge. Locke acknowledges that only God has full knowledge of the situation, but he argues that Christian doctrine is the means by which God makes this knowledge available to humans through a 'revelation' of it. However, this does not solve the problem of how it could be accepted for political purposes since the acceptance of any revelation as truth is only granted by personal religious faith, which goes beyond the sphere of communal morality that can form the basis of a liberal political theory. Let us answer such section's worry.

According to Greg Forster, Locke should not be seen as a rationalist who sought to find natural law doctrine solely on pure reason, without the assistance of revelation (Forster 2005, 3). Forster argues that Locke's value lies in the fact that politics cannot be separated from religion. Forster is right in that Locke should not be seen as a secularist who tried to divorce politics and religion. However, Locke does attempt to base at least a portion of his moral account on reason alone. Furthermore, the structure of "Locke's moral epistemology," his theory of how moral knowledge is possible, allows for the knowledge and acceptance of his moral doctrine in a way that is sufficient for political purposes. However, because his moral epistemology could allow for knowledge of other moral systems in addition to his own, the answer to why one should accept the moral accounts he puts forward is ultimately *pragmatic*.

Some commentators have argued that Locke's attempts to account for moral knowledge and provide a moral theory fell short of his promises. This led Peter Laslett ('Introduction' to his edition of the *Two Treatises*, p. 79-90) to claim that this creates an incompatibility between Locke as a philosopher of mind and knowledge and Locke as a political theorist. Consequently, the study of *Locke's Essay Concerning Human Understanding* has become fragmented. Although it is recognized that the purpose of the *Essay* was to work on moral epistemology (see Peter Nidditch's 'Foreword' to his edition of the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, 1975, p. xviii-xix), only those parts of the epistemology he develops in the *Essay* which are not directly related to moral knowledge are now considered worthy of study.

In the following, a charitable reading of Locke's moral epistemology, as exposed in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is developed. This reading aims to show that Locke did not consider his work a failure. I argue that if he did not provide what his commentators find missing in his work, it is because he already fulfilled the purpose he had in mind when he wrote it. To achieve this goal, it is necessary to first present his theory about our knowledge of substances and then contrast it with his theory of moral knowledge.

## Human Knowledge of Material Substances and Morality

Locke's epistemic theory is often described as a theory of ideas, with the notion of "idea" being its primary focus. According to Locke (*E I.i.8*), an idea is "whatsoever is the object of the understanding when a man thinks." Richard Aaron (1971, 99) notes that, within Locke's work, "thinking" is a term used widely to encompass all cognitive ideas. For Locke (*E IV.i.2*), philosophy is "nothing but true knowledge of things" (*E "Epistle to the Reader"*), and knowledge consists in the perception of coherence between ideas: "the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our Ideas."

Locke (*E I*) distinguishes between theoretical and practical knowledge and argues that the mind is not furnished with innate ideas for either of them. According to his theory of knowledge, there are no theoretical or practical principles from which the mind extracts the rest of its knowledge. This is why, in general terms, his theory has been labeled 'empiricist' (although, as shown below in the next section, there is an element of rationalism within his conception of moral knowledge).

As is well known, Locke (*E II.i.2*) compares the original state of the mind to a 'white paper,' void of all characters and ideas. All the ideas in one's mind have an origin in sensual perception. The mind receives simple ideas through the senses, which are a type of atomic information. These atomic impressions are then combined through the process of reflection into complex ideas according to the coherence and unity that the human mind finds within them. Through this, humans obtain knowledge of material substances. Locke (*E II.xii.6*) argues that the ideas of substances are 'combinations of simple Ideas taken to represent distinct particular Things subsisting in themselves.' However, he (*E IV.iv.3*) believes the mind does not know material substances immediately but only through the intervention of the ideas it has of them—which is why he has been labeled a representationalist (see, for example, Aaron, 1971, 103).

However, according to Locke (*E II.xxxi.6*), the only knowledge we can have about the substances in the world is their *nominal essences*. In other words, we only have knowledge of the complex idea formed by our mind from a number of simple ideas, which is attributed to the thing as its essence. We cannot know them as they exist in reality or what their internal constitutions are, which Locke refers to as their *real essences*. This is because the idea of their substance as a unity composed of many simple ideas cannot be perceived through our senses. We perceive them as a coherent unity, as substances, because our mind finds unity and coherence between simple ideas. However, there is no way to know if this corresponds to how they exist in reality and whether those simple ideas are indeed united like that in the world into a single substance. The truth about them lies in their real essences, but our faculties cannot perceive that truth.

In this sense, Locke distinguishes between knowledge and truth. Knowledge is the perception of coherence, while truth consists of the certainty of the mind about the existence of a correspondence between its ideas and the way things are. However, having that certainty regarding our knowledge of objects in the world is not possible. This leads Locke (*E IV.xii.10*) to the surprising conclusion that "natural philosophy is not capable of being made a Science."

Locke aimed to provide a type of *philosophical quietism* with the *Essay*, as his main interest was not to provide philosophical theses (although he did so in some areas). Rather, he attempted to dispel confusion and help readers achieve intellectual calm. By analyzing the extent of human knowledge, he (*E I i.7*) hoped to prevent individuals from extending their inquiries beyond their capacities, which would only lead to endless disputes that increase doubts and skepticism. Limiting the scope of human understanding would encourage people to avoid rushing to solve unsolvable problems. In cases where certainty is impossible, he (*E I.i.4*) believed individuals should learn to judge and guess and be content with what is attainable in their state.

However, in his pursuit of understanding the extent and limits of human knowledge within the *Essay*, Locke is not discouraged by this conclusion. He (*E I.i.5*) argues that humans possess the faculties and talents necessary to live a fulfilling life: "Men may find Matter sufficient to busy their heads and employ their hands with variety, delight, and satisfaction if they will not boldly quarrel with their own Constitution, and throw away the Blessings their hands are filled with because they are not big enough to grasp everything." In other words, he believes that the human mind is capable of acquiring knowledge to the extent that is needed to satisfy their needs in life. Locke (*E I.i.6*) further asserts that "Business here is not to know all things, but those which concern [his] conduct."

By contrast, Locke considers morality to be an area in which both knowledge *and* truth can be obtained. He argues that human faculties are well-suited to determining the truth about moral issues, as these issues are not concerned with ideas of material substances whose knowledge relies on the senses. Rather, they involve what Locke (*E II.xii.4*) refers to as the knowledge of modes. Locke (*E IV.xii.11*) even claims that, since our faculties are not capable of penetrating the internal fabric and real essences of bodies, but are sufficient for leading us to a full and clear understanding of our duty and what is of great importance, it is rational to conclude that "morality is the proper science and business of mankind."

According to Locke, our mind can produce ideas of its own in addition to the ideas of substances, which consist merely of a combination of simple ideas received through the senses. This means that our mind can further unify simple and complex ideas in a way different from how they were originally received. The idea of 'substance' itself (not of particular substances) is one such example. Other examples are the ideas of God and moral ideas themselves. While the original building blocks of these ideas did indeed come from the senses, as there is no innate knowledge, they maintain no further relation to them after the play of the mind.

The human mind can comprehend the real essences of modes. Because modes are a product of the human mind, the mind understands all the relationships between the simple ideas that constitute them. Patricia Sheridan (2010, 18) offers an example of a *chiliagon* (a thousand-sided figure) to illustrate why Locke believes this is possible. The idea of a *chiliagon* is a combination of simple ideas created by the mind and does not correspond to anything external to the mind. Humans can understand the *chiliagon's* real essence because their "idea of the *chiliagon* is its real essence." Every property of the *chiliagon* corresponds to an idea in the human mind.



Locke argues that we can achieve true knowledge of morality based on these conceptualizations. As moral ideas are modes, the truth about them is transparent to the human mind. Human beings can comprehend the real essences of moral ideas because their real essences originate from the human mind. The nominal and real essences of moral ideas are identical. Locke is, therefore, a rationalist when it comes to knowledge of morality, as he maintains that true knowledge about moral issues can be obtained solely through mental activity. This theory of the mental construction of moral ideas leads him (*E IV.iii.18*) to claim that these ideas are demonstrable.

Locke (*E IV.iii.18*) explains the demonstrability of morality through an analogy with mathematics. According to Locke, mathematical ideas are also ideas of modes. The analogy works because, even when mathematical ideas have their remote origin in a simple idea perceived by the senses, the truth about mathematical conclusions is not sought in whether they are coherent with human sensory perceptions of the world. Instead, mathematical knowledge is based on a set of premises, and the conclusions are evaluated according to whether they follow from such premises or not. Humans have true knowledge of mathematics because it was their own minds that established the premises and the rules of deduction for them. They perceive the coherence of all there is to be known about them and know all the ideas that conform to them.

Locke (*E IV.iii.18*) argues that the same applies to moral knowledge. He attempts to explain this by providing two examples that could serve as axioms for morality. One of them is "where there is no property, there is no injustice." Many Lockean scholars have attempted to read this as an attempt by Locke to provide the premises from which the entire system of morality could be derived. However, they argue that he failed in this attempt. Dunn (1969, 187) states that Locke never completed the demonstration of morality because "such a demonstration is not in principle possible" and that he came to realize this at some point in his life. Von Leyden ("Introduction" to *ENL*, p. 14) claims that the reason why Locke never produced a "detailed or convincing exposition" of how the demonstrability of morality should proceed is that "he felt some doubts about the very foundation supporting it". However, neither of these was the case.

Let us first consider the work that Locke saw himself doing within the *Essay*. As Aaron (1971, 74) emphasizes, Locke did not view the work within it as "a part of philosophy" (which for Locke included mathematical knowledge and the physical sciences of his day, in addition to logic and morality). Instead, he saw it as an examination of the instrument with which people do philosophy: human understanding.

It is clear, from the very first pages of the *Essay*, that this was indeed the case. In his 'Epistle to the Reader,' where he (*E*, p.8) humbly confesses that he does not pretend to publish it "for the Information of Men of large Thoughts and quick Apprehensions" and that it would be "censured as a great piece of Vanity, or Insolence" on his part to "pretend to instruct [his] knowing age" (p.9), he not only did not see himself as fit for such a task but also found that his age was not in want of "Master-Builders" of learning at all. Amongst these, he mentions "the incomparable Mr. Newton" and Robert Boyle, who were making breakthroughs in the physical sciences (the natural philosophy of his day). The task he saw himself doing when writing the

*Essay* was that of an "Under-Labourer" who would clear the ground for the great builders of knowledge. His (p.10) work was only meant to "remo[ve] some of the rubbish, that lies in the way to knowledge." The rubbish he referred to was that men did not know what kind of knowledge the human mind was capable of and what its extents and limits were.

Locke did not write the *Essay* with the ambition of demonstrating the entire system of mathematics or presenting a discovery in the physical sciences. This was also the case with regard to moral sciences. He was not attempting to provide a deduction or develop a complete system of morality. Instead, he sought to clarify what knowledge of the human mind could be acquired on this subject. Therefore, the two statements he presents in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* E IV.iii.18) were not intended to be the axioms from which morality could be deduced. They were only intended to be examples that illustrate the workings of the mind in relation to moral knowledge.

Locke did provide some substantive content for a moral account in some sections of the *Essay*, but that was not his main purpose. The *Two Treatises*, however, contain a slightly more developed moral account, although not a complete one. This is because Locke had a specific political goal in mind when writing them.<sup>1</sup> The moral account he presented there was meant to be a foundation for his TGT. Therefore, Locke only developed the communal part of morality, as required for such a task.

It is important to note that, according to Locke (E III.ii.7), the perception of coherence between ideas is not something that humans construct at will. Even when the human mind constructs ideas of modes, coherence between them depends on the ideas themselves. Locke also maintains that all humans roughly form the same ideas and that misunderstandings between them are often a problem of language: the same word is associated with different ideas.

### **The Pragmatic Acceptance of Locke's Naturalistic Morality**

So far, Locke's beliefs on moral truth and his argument for why moral knowledge is possible have been presented. However, whether his moral epistemology can account for the naturalistic deontic morality that underlies his TGT has not been discussed yet. There is no explicit argument in Locke's works to defend this case, but a plausible affirmative answer can be reconstructed from them. Furthermore, Locke's moral epistemology, being ultimately rationalistic, can account for true knowledge (in the Lockean sense) of other moral accounts as well. Therefore, Locke's answer to why we should accept his moral account will necessarily be *pragmatic*.

Locke's moral epistemology is ultimately rationalistic. Although the mind's first ideas may be acquired through sensory perception, moral ideas themselves are constructions of the mind. This is what allows human beings to have knowledge of their real essences. As previously mentioned, knowledge is the perception of coherence between ideas. By defending the possibility of moral knowledge in this way, the answer that can be reconstructed from Locke's works as to why humans can have

knowledge of his particular naturalistic and deontic morality will be equally *rationalist* and *coherentist*.

The implicit explanation Locke gives of how human beings can have knowledge of the normative basis of his morality account (of God as the lawmaker of the pre-political law and of human convenience in obeying it) is given in coherentist terms. Indeed, humans can have knowledge of the modes that conform to such a normative basis (formed after the original sensible ideas of pleasure and pain) if their mind creates them. The whole moral account itself could be then perceived by the mind as truth if it finds coherence between the modal ideas that conform it. The first two sections of the paper can be read as an attempt to show that there is indeed an internal coherence in the moral account that Locke developed in his works. If that is true, then it follows, within Locke's moral epistemology, that the human mind is indeed capable of having true knowledge of Locke's morality.

The obvious reply to this would be, I believe, that it is possible for the mind to create other modal ideas that would create many other coherent moral systems. The answer to this that could be reconstructed in Locke's works would be a pragmatic preference for his system over any other. As Sheridan (2010, 4) has underlined, Locke's epistemology itself is pragmatic: for Locke, human inquiries do not have to 'aim at absolute truths or certainties, but at providing the greatest possible knowledge that will serve the requirements of life.' Moreover, for Locke, the limits of epistemic certainty are to be supplemented by pragmatic decisions.

Indeed, in many of Locke's works, there is the idea that human beings cannot be completely certain of their duties. He (*E.I.i.5*) claims that the creator has given humans only a "sight of their own Duties," only "certain knowledge" of them; in "the greatest part of [their] concernment, [God] has afforded [them] only the twilight" (*E.IV.xiv.2*). Because of this, he (*E.IV.xiv.2*) believes that human conduct should ultimately be based on probability rather than knowledge. Therefore, humans should strive to construct the most coherent moral doctrines, but the internal coherence they find in them will be as far as they can go in terms of epistemological certainty. However, this is enough for humans to act. And given that, the preference for one coherent system of morality over another can be justified within Locke's thought.

Locke's pragmatic reason for advocating his naturalistic and deontic moral account is that it provides strong support for his theory of government justification, as I have attempted to demonstrate. If one is sufficiently persuaded by the latter, she will have reason to accept the former as well.

Based on his empirical position regarding the knowledge of material substances, Locke concluded that human beings cannot have certainty of their knowledge of these issues. Regarding moral knowledge, his rationalism allows human beings to have certainty of their knowledge of moral ideas, but only insofar as they are constructions of their own minds. However, humans cannot be certain whether their modal ideas refer to anything beyond the ideas themselves.

There is a problem with this, as mathematical ideas as modes do not necessarily require a referent outside of the human mind. On the other hand, metaphysical ideas that ground Locke's morality (such as those of God and teleology in nature) require a referent to motivate people to act. The mere perception of the coherence of the system

is not enough to prompt them to act because people realize that they are only following the dictates of their own minds.

The only answer that can be gleaned from Locke's works is the pragmatic one, but ultimately, this appears to be inadequate. Locke's moral philosophy necessitates that human beings acknowledge themselves as creatures subject to God. Its potency stems precisely from the notion of God as the lawgiver. This is not meant to be a Kantian stance in which the mind serves as the ultimate legislator, and the normative force of the law derives solely from reason.

That the only way human beings could acquire full certainty, and not merely a pragmatic probability, about the morality that Locke develops is through the acceptance of revelation. This is if they accept it as information that God himself gives them about how things look from his gods-eye perspective. In this sense, revelation would constitute an advantageous epistemic position in which human beings acquire certainty about their moral knowledge. On this line, Forster (2005, 13) has defended that 'the Essay encourages rational embrace of religious faith'. Whether or not that is indeed the case, what is certain is that towards the end of his life, Locke recoiled into the analysis of the Christian revelation. This might have been the result of his realization of the advantageous position of revelation.

Some scholars have made similar points about what could have been the motivation behind Locke's writing of *The Reasonableness of Christianity*. Dunn (1969, 192), for example, has claimed that it 'provides both a moral rationalization of human 'partiality' and moral incomprehension and practical strategy for amending it.' Goldie (1997, xxii) claims that Locke turned in *The Reasonableness of Christianity* to 'an increasing reliance on revelation' because he found that the New Testament should supply 'what reason fails to deliver.'

## CONCLUSION

By reconstructing and analyzing several of Locke's arguments found in *The Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, *Two Treatises of Government*, and *Essays on the Law of Nature*, I have proven two main claims. First, Locke's theory of government justification is necessarily dependent on the deontic and naturalistic morality that he develops in those works. Second, such a moral account is normatively strong and motivationally effective, thus avoiding the problems that deontic and naturalistic accounts generally face. From this, we can conclude that Locke's theory of government justification is robust because the moral theory upon which it is based is consistent.

However, I have acknowledged that accepting this conclusion from the arguments found in Locke's works faces a plausible objection. The moral account that Locke supports cannot justify the liberal principles of his political theory if it can only be known through religious revelation. In response, I have argued that the moral epistemology developed by Locke in *An essay concerning human understanding* shows that knowledge of such morality is possible through human faculties alone.

Nevertheless, Locke's argument for this claim rests on the idea that moral concepts are constructed by the mind and that knowledge of a moral system is derived from perceiving the coherence among its constituents. One objection to this is that many other coherent moral systems could be constructed. The only response to this objection that I found in Locke's works is the suggestion that his own theory is coherent and should be accepted on pragmatic grounds, given that moral knowledge only allows for probability, not certainty. I have argued that the probability of Locke's moral theory is increased by the fact that it is not only coherent within itself but also coherent with his theory of government justification. However, this latter argument is only relevant if we have a reason to want a robust justification for Locke's theory of government in the first place.

I have also recognized that the answer to the epistemic objection found in Locke's works is not completely satisfactory, as we seem to want a ground for our moral and political principles that is more than strong probability. Therefore, an attempt to account for the knowledge of Locke's moral account through a different epistemic theory than the one he developed could be an interesting area for future research.

Finally, it should be noted that my work was confined to the groundings of what I called "Locke's theory of government justification." However, it is possible that other Lockean political principles that have shaped many aspects of liberal political theory are grounded within Locke's works in the same moral principles. Jeremy Waldron (2002) has attempted to do this in relation to Locke's theory of equality, and further study in this direction could constitute a large area of research opportunity within political philosophy.

## NOTE

1. It is widely accepted that Locke wrote the *Two Treatises* as a response to a political event. However, there is no agreement as to what this event was. Some hold that it was meant to justify the English Glorious Revolution. Others hold that he wrote it as a tract of Whig ideology to support the exclusion crisis. For a discussion of this, see Dunn (1969) and Laslett's (1960) introduction to his edition of the *Two Treatises*. For my argument, it suffices to acknowledge that Locke was aiming to develop a political doctrine within them.

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