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Toleration or Latitude? Two Models for Liberal Politics

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The idea of toleration is generally[1] taken to mean that some agent has strong reasons to disapprove of some belief or practice but also has strong countervailing reasons not to act coercively against it. That there are such countervailing reasons was argued for by important figures in the history of political thought, notably by Locke in his *Letter Concerning Toleration* (2010), often regarded as a founding text for what came to be called the liberal tradition and for that reason much studied and commented-upon today. Among Locke's contemporaries, however, were a number of important figures, very much less well known today, who advanced a different view: the Latitudinarians, who maintained that there were reasons to assign only probable truth to one's own beliefs, and so to extend a degree of latitude to those who believed differently.[2] Today, we are not much concerned, if at all, about the immediate political implications of this divergence of view, Locke proposing to "tolerate" dissenting congregations outside the established church, the Latitudinarians proposing, rather, to "comprehend," that is, to find room for (some of) them within a "broad" Church of England: for church membership and citizenship, in Western countries, have by now been decisively separated, and whether one is in or out of a church is no longer politically consequential. But political theorists should still take an interest in the late seventeenth-century ideas that underpinned these different strategies, if—as I hope to show—they contain basically different models of inclusion and accommodation that are of importance to political theory today.

We need not look far to see that ideas of latitude, broadly understood, are still taken to have an important place in liberal political theory, which is often said to be connected with some form of moderate skepticism or

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fallibilism: that we cannot be sure of (some of) our beliefs is a reason to refrain from imposing them, it is often believed (for example, Macedo, 1990: 267; Rorty, 1989: 46; Sleat, 2013: 135). One particularly forthright version of this view was advanced in an influential book by the late Brian Barry, who maintained that, among the possible foundations for liberal politics, "*the only one*" to work was the endorsement of fallibilism in knowledge (1995: 172, emphasis added). What makes his view especially important for this article is that he claims to find its origins in the Latitudinarians themselves; in fact, he says, "latitudinarian" is "perhaps the most historically accurate term" for the liberal tradition as a whole (169n). He prefers the term to "skeptical," which, he says, implies too wholesale a rejection of certainty; a latitudinarian may hold beliefs with some degree of confidence. Referring to a classic work of intellectual history by Barbara Shapiro, *Probability and Certainty in Seventeenth-Century England* (1983), Barry locates the beginnings of liberalism in a broad trend in theology, philosophy, science and law, a trend that led to the rejection of certainty and the embrace of probability in knowledge. Ranging broadly over many intellectual domains, Shapiro shows that, outside of logic and mathematics where "demonstration" (that is unimpugned proof) was thought to be possible, it came to be thought that beliefs are arrayed on a spectrum of more or less probable "degrees of assurance." In the case of theology, the Latitudinarians rejected "a zealous dogmatism which was overly confident in opinions that lacked adequate certainty" (Shapiro, 1983: 10). It is just such a view, Barry argued, that enabled political theorists to recognize that others may reasonably weigh the probabilities differently from themselves and so reasonably differ in their conclusions: the unique source, in his view, of liberalism itself.

Focusing initially on Barry's own exemplary historical case, this paper first challenges the view that epistemic latitude is "the only" way to arrive at liberal conclusions. More strongly, however, it will argue, second, that epistemic latitude is in fact no way at all, despite Barry's forthright defence of this quite prevalent view. It will argue that Lockean toleration, understood here as an approach that requires no epistemic premises but offers political reasons for restraint, is effective in ways that latitude fails to be.

I Latitude and disagreement

On the surface at least, the Latitudinarian writers offer ample support for the attractive picture that Shapiro paints of them and on which Barry relies for his proposed characterization of the basis of liberalism. We could, for the sake of a few examples, cite Joseph Glanvill, who, much like Locke himself, poured scorn on the self-defeating claim to "orthodoxy," self-defeating because if you make that claim your opponents can simply

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Abstract. Theories of toleration maintain that people sometimes have good reasons not to act on their convictions, however strong. Theories of latitude maintain that one should doubt the strength of one's convictions. While toleration has often been taken to be foundational for the liberal tradition, another view (made fully explicit by Brian Barry's *Justice as Impartiality*) is that we should look, rather, to the idea of latitude, as exemplified in late seventeenth-century Anglican writings. Taking these writings as its initial point of reference, the article maintains that toleration, rather than latitude, should be seen as foundational for the liberal tradition, which is better understood in terms of what one person owes to another than in terms of the relative validity of their beliefs.

Résumé. D'après certaines conceptions de la tolérance, l'on pourrait bien, pour de bonnes raisons, être amené à agir à l'encontre de ses propres convictions, pour fortes qu'elles soient. D'autre part, il existe des théories de la latitude selon lesquelles tout individu doit douter de la force de ses convictions. Bien que la tolérance ait souvent été considérée comme l'une des bases de la tradition libérale, une toute autre idée, formellement explicitée par Brian Barry dans *Justice as Impartiality* [Justice et Impartialité] affirme que nous devrions considérer plutôt l'idée de latitude à partir des ouvrages anglicans de la fin du XVIIe siècle. C'est sur la base de ces ouvrages que l'auteur avance l'idée que c'est en fait la tolérance et non pas la latitude que l'on devrait tenir pour notion fondatrice de la tradition libérale, cette dernière étant mieux comprise comme ce dont un individu est redevable à un autre, plutôt qu'ayant rapport à la validité relative de ses croyances.

mirror it back to you. Glanvill remarked satirically, "Stand off! I am more orthodox than thou art" (1675: 29), echoed here by Matthew Hale: "Like a company of boys that blow bubbles out of a Wall-nut shell, every one runs after his bubble and calls it religion" (1684: 40). Similarly, William Chillingworth had written: "We wish heartily that all controversies were ended… and in the mean while, think it best to content ourselves with, and to persuade others unto, an unity of charity and mutual toleration; seeing God hath authorized no man to force all men into unity of opinion" (1845: 135). Arrogant self-certainty should give way to a reluctance to censure. Glanvill stressed that our understanding was imperfect and liable to deception, urging that "We must endeavour first to destroy the confidence of assertions and to establish a prudent reservedness and modesty in opinions" (1675: 1). "Confidence in uncertainties," he wrote elsewhere, "is the greatest enemy to what is certain" (1970: dedication). Very much in that tradition, Symon Patrick acidly remarked that "Judging, censuring and despising each other are so far from being thought vice by the generality of men, that they often serve as an entertainment to pass away time" (1707: 3).

Accompanying this was an acceptance of "the darkness of things themselves," as Benjamin Whichcote nicely put it. "When there is less of reason to be said for a thing; or where the rule of faith is short… we are referred to reason, and to the sense of our own nature," he writes and, given this obscurity, it is "more becoming not to undervalue another's sense" (1751: 2, 29).

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Likewise, Glanvill comments on "the shortness of our intellectual sight, the deceptibility and impositions of our senses, the tumultuary disorders of our passions, the prejudices of our infant education" as barriers between us and truth. (1960: 14). On this theme, Chillingworth had written as follows:

> Many of these controversies that are disputed among Christians… are either not decidable by that means which God hath provided, and so not necessary to be decided; or if they be, yet not so plainly and evidently so, as to oblige all men to hold one way; or lastly, if decidable, and evidently decided, yet you may hope that the erring part, by reason of some veil before his eyes… does not see the question to be decided against him, and so opposes not that which he doth know to be the word of God, but only that which you know to be so. (1845, 77–78)

That some controversies "among Christians" are "not necessary to be decided," as Chillingworth puts it, is an important claim that Locke himself was to make.[3] But the view that it is implausible to suppose that the conditions of salvation are inconsistent with the ordinary understandings of people was already a Latitudinarian commonplace. Matthew Hale, for example, brushed aside scholars' disputes "about questions not necessary to be known, in their own nature impossible for humane understandings to determine," mentioning as examples the points disputed between protestant sects (1684: 6) Accompanying this is a sort of theological minimalism, often supported by appeals to the "ancient simplicity" of the primitive Church (that is, the Christian church as it was imagined to be before Rome added superfluous requirements (Patrick, 1662: 5). Edward Fowler urged that zeal should be devoted to the pursuit of "real holiness": "Doubtless it cannot be worth our while to lay out any considerable matter of our heat, either for or against doubtful opinions, alterable modes, rites and circumstances of religion" (1699: 170). This doctrinal minimalism was supported, of course, by the long-standing idea of "indifferent things," the "modes, rites and circumstances" for which churches could claim no scriptural warrant.[4] It was, however, exactly the Church's retention of such "modes, rites and circumstances" that was a stumbling block to membership by Dissenters, who found the Church's self-ascribed simplicity insufficiently simple.

In explaining the reasons for different judgments about truth claims, Latitudinarian writers often referred to the influence of "tempers" or "temperaments," ideas owing something to the ancient medical doctrine of humours. Because our "tempers" are "particular," Glanvill wrote, some doctrines "find easy welcome, and entertainment" in us (1765: 1) "We love and hate without a known cause of either," because of "temperamental" relish or disgust (1885: 103). Allowance must be made, Whichcote wrote, for "constitution, complexion, age, temper, education, temptation,

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different natural inclination" (1751: 32). John Moore wrote, "The difference of degrees of affection with which men serve God, does often depend upon the difference of their tempers and constitutions" (1708: 7). Hale brought out the influence of the ancient medical theory that underlay notions of temper and complexion, likening religious tastes to "the humours of the body" which, "though they are no part of the true vital blood, yet they mingle with it, and run along in it" (1684: 37).[5] Recognizing our embodiedness, then, we should recognize too that our judgments of probable truth may reflect subliminal dispositions.

II The reflexivity issue

This brief sample could be extended, but there is no need to do so, for the Shapiro-Barry view of the Latitudinarians' public epistemic stance is quite clearly true.[6] In this context, however, what does need attention is what follows from it as a political matter. Here initial doubts may be raised by the very much less appealing and much more authoritarian picture of them offered by the political theorist Richard Ashcraft (1992), in his account of their role in the Church of England after the Revolution of 1688. As Ashcraft pointed out, we miss a lot of the story if—as, one may add, Barry and Shapiro do—we regard the Latitudinarians simply as bearers of a general intellectual trend, for they were also political actors; they were concerned about the distribution of power and preferment within the Church, and also were deeply concerned about the institutional power of the Church itself, in relation to the conditions for assigning and denying the rights of citizenship. For all their attractively probabilistic views, then, they needed to justify and assert their authority to include and exclude by defining the terms of membership, and to uphold their definitions in the face of emphatically expressed dissent. And here, building on Ashcraft's line of thought, we encounter a not unexpected problem: the move from epistemic doubt to political authority. If I am fallible enough to consider including or excluding you, on terms that I set, how can I be infallible enough to decide on your inclusion or exclusion in the first place? How wide is allowable latitude to be? The political question shifts the ground from the merits of an epistemology to the basis of a claim to judge for others.

Looking back, it now seems extraordinary that, in admitting the central role of temperaments in religious affiliations, none of the Latitudinarian writers should have acknowledged the issue of reflexivity.[7] When Joseph Glanvill, for example, expounding a general theory of "constitutional [that is, temperamental] partiality," attributed dissent to the "senseless conceits and fooleries [that] cannot miss of harbor, where affection, grown upon the stock of a depraved constitution, hath endeared them" (1970:

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123), he gives no hint that a hostile (and equally polemical!) critic could easily return the charge. Or when Robert Grove advises Dissenters that "a serious application of mind to the more weighty duties of religion would in great measure silence the controversies about indifferent things" (1681: 91), we may note at once that exactly the same remark could be made by Dissenters objecting to the adoption of indifferent things into Church liturgy and ritual. We find several Latitudinarians falling back on an apparently arbitrary allocation of the onus of proof. If liturgical prescriptions are not mentioned in Scripture, John Moore argued, then they cannot be said to be forbidden, and it cannot be a sin to conform to a practice that is not forbidden (n.d., 52). Likewise, Fowler argued that "whatsoever is of an indifferent nature, as it is not commanded, so neither is it forbidden by any moral or positive law," and the Church's requirements must therefore be seen as "innocent and harmless" (1684: 14, 18). Some believe that certain requirements that are shared with the Roman church do not match the gravity and solemnity essential to divine worship: "But we say they do, and our *yea* is as good as your *nay"* (33). Even if you somehow persist in thinking that the Church is in error in imposing liturgy, Grove wrote, the fault lies with those who impose, not with those who submit with "patience and humility" (1681: 39). It scarcely needs saying that such arguments are entirely ineffective in meeting Dissenters' conscientious scruples about conforming.

One solution to this issue was to evade the epistemic issue altogether by relying on taken-for-granted beliefs about the historicity of their Church and hence a justification of its authority that was beyond the reach of disputed issues of theology or liturgy (Champion, 1992). That, of course, makes them uninteresting outside the context of those (very special) historical beliefs. The second solution was to claim that, despite the undemonstrability of beliefs about interpretation, liturgy and ritual, their own beliefs could be held with such a degree of confidence that refusal to accept them amounted to a cognitive failing or perhaps a lack of necessary educational background. It was a commonplace that "God has not given all men the same understandings" (Patrick, 1707: 6), that some fall short because of "weakness of parts" or defects in "apprehension and faculties" (Whichcote, 1751: 32), that "the diversity of men's capacities" (together with different educational levels) causes some to perceive things that others cannot see (Fowler, 1699: 166), and that the church should make allowance for the "common infirmities of humane understanding" (Grove, 1676: 11). Differences in capacity explain why "what is sufficiently declared to one may not be so to another," as Chillingworth had put it, also noting "the strange powers that education and prejudices instilled by it have over even excellent understandings," and the way in which "understandings, by reason of their different educations, are fashioned and shaped for the entertainment of different opinions" (1838, vol. 1: 326, 330). Symon

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Patrick, likewise, noted that people differ, not only because of differences in quickness of understanding, but because "all have not the same education, not the same opportunity of informing themselves" (1707: 6). Whichcote wrote of the "accidental prejudices from education" (1751: 2). Fowler explained the fact that "some things may be plainly perceived by one… which cannot be so by another" by, in part, differences in "education and other means and advantages" (1699: 166).

It is hard to see what alternative they had, given the reflexivity issue. If, in the course of a dispute with someone, one claims the authority to settle the disputed matter at hand, that can only be because the authority comes from some source extraneous to the dispute, or because the opponent's view, although capable of being true as a matter of general principle, is as it happens preponderantly false, because of some cognitive deficiency. Standing aside from this particular context, one can see here a general problem: if fallibilists want to win, they must either claim some (special) non-fallible justification for doing so, or else claim that, while there may be reasons on both sides, the balance is indisputably, as they themselves judge, in their own favour.

Their attempts to reach out to dissenting congregations, then, resembled a curiously unilateral sort of dialogue in which one party claims the authority to declare what its outcome is. That an outcome is only probably right is obviously neither here nor there, politically speaking, if one party claims the right to determine where the balance of probabilities lies. Politically speaking, then, the claim to a higher degree of probability is no different at all from a claim to certainty, if the claim to a higher degree of probability is taken to be sufficient to establish authority over another (dissenting) party.[8]

III Locke and authority

Interestingly, Locke was to criticize exactly such a fallacy, not in the Latitudinarians but in their common enemy, high-church conformism, in the person of its spokesman, Jonas Proast, famous for pamphlets that waged an uncompromising 14-year-long war against making concessions to Dissent, whether in the form of toleration or comprehension. It was in his lengthy replies to Proast's demand for doctrinal and liturgical conformity that Locke worked out the major part of his theory of toleration; and at a crucial point in making his argument he claimed that his adversary's case rested on nothing more than judging a dispute in his own favour. In defending uniformity against any sort of challenge, Locke alleged, Proast was merely engaged in a question-begging assertion of the Church's rightness. According to Locke, the defence of orthodoxy simply proceeded by "supposing" that the orthodox view was correct,

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and that those who dissented could simply be required to endorse that supposition (Locke, 2010: 99). It is important to see exactly what is at issue here. The supposition that Locke objects to is not conviction about the truth of one's beliefs but the requirement that one's own conviction amounts to an argument for one's opponent to agree. Surely I am allowed to believe that I am right, Proast replied in turn, unperceptively taking Locke's claim to be a skeptical one (111): but this entirely misses his point that while we are all allowed to suppose that our sincerely held views are right, supposing that that gives us authority claims over those who disagree is a different matter altogether, for they are hardly likely to accept, as a premise of discussion, a claim that effectively predetermines its outcome in their disfavour. There is a great difference, Locke says, between the assurance that you are right, and claiming a privilege by virtue of your assurance (157).[9]

This remark is best understood, I believe, in the context of a very interesting strand of argument that emerges in Locke's successive defences of toleration against his critic.[10] The original *Letter*'s first argument concerns what can be contained within the commission or mandate of the magistrate. Several reasons are initially advanced, but as his defence of the idea of a limited mandate evolves, Locke comes to rely increasingly on the constraints imposed by the terms of reasonable agreement. At the very outset of his first defence he invites Proast to bear in mind the conditions of mutual dialogue as a political model (67); and in his lengthy *Third Letter*, he repeatedly enjoins him to imagine what he could legitimately say when actually confronted with an opponent whom he was obliged to meet on equal dialogical terms, and to come up with "arguments and proofs" that the other could accept (156); or, "if you were to argue with a papist, or a Presbyterian, in the case, what privilege have you to tell him that his reason and his conscience is [sic] perverted, more than he has to tell you that yours is so?" (162). What you can *tell* him, under conditions of discursive equality, is not the same as what you suppose to be true; or probably true.

What is still more to the point is that the exchange with Proast shows us that the degrees-of-assurance model is not even a *sufficient* condition for tolerant policies, let alone a necessary one. For Proast, the high churchman, deeply hostile though he was to the Latitudinarians' project, shared with them the epistemic model with which they are identified. It is available, then, in the service of both comprehension and orthodoxy. This becomes clear in the final stages of his controversy with Locke. He acknowledges that religious belief falls short of what can be "demonstrated," that is, in the language of the time, shown to be deductively necessary, like mathematical truth; nevertheless, he claims, there is a degree of assurance that is held with such confidence that it "is called knowledge," even though it is probabilistic rather than deductive (165). We can have such assurance in it that

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we can rely on its truth for the purpose of imposing it on others. So its probabilistic character does not, apparently, stand in the way of its imposition, and so, by implication, the degrees-of-assurance model doesn't stand in the way of coercive imposition either. Different though Proast and his opponent are from a political point of view here, nothing fundamentally separates them from an epistemic point of view. Or only a word does: Locke insists on reserving the word "knowledge" for demonstrable (deductive) knowledge; Proast wants to extend it to, as it were, the next level down, beliefs that he regards as highly probable. Locke makes sarcastic fun of this, pointing out that on Proast's view one would be free if one wished to extend the term "knowledge" to any of the next 300 levels of assurance at will, thus arbitrarily conferring upon oneself a right to determine sufficiency (172).

It is important to clarify what is going on here, not only in order to see what is going on between Locke and his critic, but also to see what distinguishes Locke from his Latitudinarian friends. Although Locke denies that religious beliefs can be demonstrably known, it cannot be this denial that carries argumentative weight here, because, as we have seen, he shares the acceptance of their undemonstrability with his critic. For, in addition to insisting on a distinction between knowledge and faith, he has two further objections to imposing religious belief. The first is that even if for the sake of argument we granted that there could be certainty, it still would not follow that it could be imposed, because it could be the case that the certainty could not be successfully communicated to the other party. People generally can't, for example, perform very complex sums in arithmetic in their heads; they can't follow the proofs of Euclid without some grounding in geometry and algebra (154, 162). A system of religious belief will be a complex thing with assumed premises and mutually dependent parts; and even if we suppose one such system to be the true one it is still the case that what makes us receptive or unreceptive is also a complex matter, in which not only temperament but also taste (18), experience and the influence of respected others (155) play a part.

Second—a point made by Locke repeatedly, in varying ways—even if we suppose that there is a truth of the matter, and even a way to determine it, we cannot give truth itself a political presence. "If true religion could appear in person, take the magistrate's seat, and there judge all that rejected her, something might be done. But the mischief of it is, it is a man that must condemn, men must punish" (158–59). Again, "anyone who believes any religion to be true, cannot but judge the grounds upon which he believes it to be true are just and sufficient. For if he judged otherwise, he could not then believe it to be true" (170–71), with the consequence that in the name of imposing the true religion many false religions will be imposed.

It would be mistaken, given the general structure of Locke's argument, to regard this line of objection as merely practical and not as an objection to

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imposing "the true religion" properly understood.[11] In an argument that takes seriously the requirement of mutual assent, what one can rationally assent to figures at a fundamental level. God in person, Locke says, was "king of the Hebrew people in a very particular sense" (29), but under "the liberty of the Gospel" (25) all political arrangements must be the outcome of humanly made agreements, which persons must arrive at through the joint exercise of reason. True religion, not being a person, is not a possible contractual partner; and so its unavailability is simply a basic feature of our political situation and the conditions of legitimacy imposed by it.

IV Barry's latitude

Let us return, finally, to Brian Barry, who as we saw was notably explicit in his claims for latitudinarian views, to the point of suggesting, remarkably, that the liberal tradition could profitably be renamed in their honour. Why does he say that epistemic latitude is "the only" way for the process of rational assent to arrive at liberal conclusions?

Barry examines two rival views. One is that, if we are seeking agreement with someone who holds a sharply different view of the matter, we should retreat to a neutral ground in order to find a mutually acceptable basis for discussion. The other is that, while we may be convinced by our own view of the matter, we may recognize that reasons sufficient to convince us of it may be insufficient to convince others. Both of these views, he claims, reduce to his own preferred—latitudinarian—position, for the following reasons. First, why would we be willing to retreat to neutral ground unless we suspected that our own view might be false? We wouldn't be willing to do so, after all, if we were as convinced as we are that the Earth rotates around the Sun rather than vice versa (Barry, 1995: 175). Second, reasons are either strong or weak, not strong to some and weak to others, and if we acknowledge that others might see flaws in our reasons, that should affect the degree of confidence that we ourselves place in them (179). So, whichever line of argument we consider, we should conclude that while we may be confident we cannot be certain enough to require the assent of others—which is exactly why liberalism should really be called "latitudinarianism."

Now that conclusion cannot be Locke's, because as we have just seen, he distinguishes between the ground of one's belief, that is, the strength of the reasons that support it and the political claims that our belief entitles us to make upon others, that is, whether or not we can require others to agree to conform their behaviour to what we believe to be right. Given that distinction, it cannot be that the strength of the latter can simply be read off the strength of the former, as though the legitimacy of political demands were simply a function of the degree of truth of the beliefs that give rise to them. How, though, might Locke explain the difference?

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One that suggests itself—one that Barry also briefly touches on (175) — rests on the idea of civil peace (Locke, 2010: 142, 153). If members of a society insist on imposing their favoured views when these are contested, then, regardless of whether their views are true or not or how true they are, the result will be civil war. We all have a strong interest in avoiding civil war, and so perhaps the fear of war gives us a sufficient shared reason to avoid the attempt to impose contested views. That consideration would bring Locke somewhat close to the current "realist" school of political theory and to their central idea of *modus vivendi*, that is, the idea that the most we can hope for, in a context of pluralism, is an agreement not to fight.[12] That agreement is sufficiently justified, on the realist view, by the desire for social peace and appreciation of its advantages. How compelling, though, is that view? That is a matter of dispute. Some—like John Rawls (2001: 194–95)—see it as too fragile, conditional and temporary in its appeal. It seems a compelling reason to all parties when none of them can hope to win in a fight, less compelling when one party hopes or comes to hope for victory, perhaps by putting together a winning coalition, or perhaps by securing policies whose long-term effect is to weaken the adversary. Others, however, see this fear as overdrawn: Daniel Weinstock, for example, argues that in what we may term the enduring tit-for-tat circumstances of a pluralist society, it is reasonable to suppose that parties will see the payoffs from repeated compromises as enough of a reason to find the *modus vivendi* project attractive (Weinstock, 2006).

How much weight to place on this sort of consideration will naturally depend on how we interpret and order the elements in the multi-layered defence of toleration that Locke comes to evolve. This is a controversial matter, about which no summary statement is likely to be convincing.[13] But another line of thinking suggests an alternative to any of the views outlined and criticized above, that is the idea of dialogue, on which, it was suggested, Locke came to depend in warding off his critic. We are all entitled to confidence in the beliefs on which we stake the fate of our soul, without entertaining doubts, that is entailed by the requirement that we judge for ourselves, as well as by the requirement for sincerity: insincerely held beliefs are not only useless but perilous to the soul (Bou-Habib, 2003). But when it is precisely the truth of one's claim that is at issue, it is pointless to conduct an argument by supposing one's adversary to accept it. That is, interestingly, not only a consideration that Locke urges against the upholders of orthodoxy, but also exactly the complaint that Ashcraft makes against the Latitudinarians themselves: claiming the high ground of "reason," they simply overrode the different understanding of "reason" that was important to their opponents. The Latitudinarians claimed reason for their (to them) overwhelmingly probable conclusions: it was very typical of the Dissenting mind, however, to identify reason with the unforced process of reaching conclusions (Ashcraft, 1992: 160–64).

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To the extent, then, that we place the weight on this element in Locke's argument,[14] we will be led, not towards the realist view but, rather, towards a view that foregrounds the moral importance of personal assent. Such a view is of course exemplified by the idea of a social contract that Locke relies on in his political writings, including his later defences of toleration (Locke, 2010: 106, 141, 160). We can give authority to something only if it meets the test of unforced public agreement. That isn't the same as a probability test for truthfulness. Probability is a matter of how well some claim stands up in the face of relevant evidence, as assessed from a standpoint that is no one's in particular; while something can be the object of public agreement if it can be assented to from everyone's particular point of view. Locke's defence of toleration, then, rests on his belief that what can be assented to from everyone's particular point of view is a limited set and cannot include every interest that engages people, when such interests are inconsistent with civil association. Such interests would include, notably, an interest in obeying the true God, for, as we have seen, Locke repeatedly points out that "the true religion" cannot be given a civil form to which (undeceived) assent can be given.

But what, in turn, lies behind Locke's belief in the founding role of assent? Here we come to the heart of the rival views of liberal political theory that are brought into play by Barry's latitudinarian thesis. All that can prevent us from imposing our views on others, he believes, is a sense that our views may not be true. Locke believes that we have reasons not to impose even when we are convinced that our views are true. These reasons are moral ones. We have to take the assent of others seriously because everyone counts; toleration is called for just because while everyone counts, not everyone agrees. It is pointless to introduce an epistemic test of whether their disagreement is good enough to count in the resolution simply because their disagreement extends to the appropriateness and/or the outcomes of epistemic tests themselves. So the view that an epistemic idea—such as latitude or fallibility—can be called on for political purposes may display a fundamental confusion. *Ideas* can be related to one another in terms of how true or probably true they are; *people*, however, must relate to one another in terms of a status that they have that cannot be conditional on the validity of their views. As John Horton (2010) nicely points out, those of us who have no suspicion at all that astrology might after all be true nevertheless have no desire whatsoever to persecute people who are guided by their horoscopes. Even the misguided have rights.

V Conclusion

At the outset of this article it was acknowledged that paying any sort of attention to late seventeenth-century Anglican thought could be seen as a

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sort of historical excursion. Obviously, I don't believe that it is. Rather, my view is that the Latitudinarian moment to which Barry refers the origins of liberalism is the one historical example that we have of the fallibilist idea in action and valuable in that it demonstrates that idea's exemplary failure. Its failure was not, I hope to have shown, merely contingent. It failed because—as argued in section II—a fallibilist can claim authority only by turning to some external standard or else by claiming a degree of assurance that renders fallibility merely theoretical; and it failed because—as claimed in section IV—arguments about what can be known or not known or how well things can be known bear upon the relations among ideas, not the relations among people, in a political context at least. What was proposed as a model for liberalism, I believe, is better viewed as an object lesson in what liberal political theory should avoid. Liberalism has to be a theory about what is owed to one's co-citizens, not about what is owed to their ideas (Lecce, 2008: 201–25). Like toleration, it has to be premised on equality among persons, rather than respect for their beliefs. To bring the relative validity of their beliefs into the question is either to appeal to a politically unavailable authority or else to magnify whatever authority happens to be politically available.

Endnotes

1 But, it should be noted, not universally: see, for example, Scheffler (2010: 312–36). If we accept Scheffler's version, then we will need to distinguish between "disapproval toleration" (of the sort assumed here) and an idea of toleration that may come closer to what is often called "recognition." For variants of the standard view see Heyd (1996), McKinnon (2006), Newey (2013); and in this journal La Selva (2015) or, for a hostile critique premised on the standard view, Brown (2006).

2 I capitalize "Latitudinarian" when referring to seventeenth-century writers, but not when using the term as a generic one. As far as I know there is no authoritative list of membership in the Latitudinarian movement, and I rely on secondary sources such as Reedy (1985) and Spelman (1993) in including people in it. The editions of Latitudinarian writings used in this article are those available in the Cambridge University Library.

3 "Would you have every poor protestant, for example, in the Palatinate, examine thoroughly whether the pope be infallible… and an hundred other questions in controversy between the papists and the protestants… [if so] the countryman must leave off plowing and sowing, and betake himself to the study of Greek and Latin… and leave his family to starve" (Locke, 2010: 96). For other parallels between Locke and the Latitudinarians, see Marshall (1992), Stanton (2006).

4 For a history of this idea, see Verkamp (1977).

5 Hale (1684: 37). According to Joseph Frank Payne (Payne, 1881: introduction, 4), ideas of temper "derived all their original significance from the place which they had in the Galenical system." Glanvill also endorses the view that "the complexion of the mind… also follows the Temperament of the Body" (1970: 121).

6 For a sympathetic (but not uncritical) account, see Reedy (1985), and for an eloquent recent defence of "intellectual modesty" see Leland and van Wietmarschen (2012).

7 Scalet (2000) maintains that the problem of reflexivity plagues Barry's own argument.

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8 Here we may note that the prominent Latitudinarian Joseph Glanvill, whose writings played an indirect role in the 1692 Salem witch trials, believed that the existence of witches was no less probably certain than the existence of Julius Caesar; see Schiff (2015: 70).

9 For a close twenty-first-century parallel, see Quong (2007), glossing Rawls (1993): "Reasonable citizens do not need to be sceptical about their own knowledge… They need only to recognize that from the perspective of their fellow citizens, it will seem unreasonable if they wield political power on the basis of that knowledge" (335).

10 Proast is cited from the responses to Locke included in Locke (2010).

11 Jeremy Waldron (1991: 108) claims that Locke has no case here against "intolerance as such," but only against "particular instances of it," that is, instances in which the ruler is mistaken. For reasons given in the text, I believe this misses the essential contractual step in Locke's line of argument.

12 For illuminating discussions of this school see the special issue of *European Journal of Political Theory* 9:4 (2010).

13 For discussions of the overall priorities among Locke's arguments, see Locke (2010: Introduction), Vernon (2013), and, more recently, Tate (2016).

14 This qualification is necessary because some scholars attribute a skeptical view to Locke himself; see, for instance, Wolfson (2010: xv). For the purposes of this article, however, it is not necessary to deny that Locke could have deployed more than one argument, especially in the polemical context in which his defence of toleration evolved. However, for resistance to the "skeptical" reading of Locke, see Vernon (1995: 52–69).

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