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Locke's *Thoughts* on Reputation

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Abstract: Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* is designed to provide the education necessary to produce citizens guided by the obligations of natural law. A careful examination of his recommendations, however, reveals that his education does not in fact teach children to obey the law of nature directly. Instead, it teaches them to obey the law of opinion or reputation. At the same time, he encourages children to see themselves as rational and therefore free. The law of reputation provides the necessary restraint to balance the desire for liberty, and the desire for liberty ensures that citizens must respect others in order to win their esteem. Respect for others' rights, an essential element of Lockean natural law, emerges from this specific combination of the law of reputation and the love of liberty.

Natural law is an essential element of the political project of Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*. As he explains this law, each of us has the duty "as much as he can, to preserve the rest of mankind," or, at the very least, "no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions."[1] Because individuals not only have a natural freedom "to order their actions … as they think fit" (ST 4), but also have a corresponding obligation to respect others' freedom, Locke can construct a limited government, one oriented toward protecting our liberties. In addition to providing the underpinnings of his account of legitimate authority, natural law plays an active role in the functioning of governments, since it provides the standard to which the legislature must appeal in determining positive law and the standard to which the citizens must appeal in judging the legitimacy of any particular government (ST 135, 202, 222). The viability of a Lockean political order, then, depends on the presence of a sufficient number of members who take natural law as their ultimate guide. This means that an understanding of his politics must include an understanding of how we come to judge and act in accord with the fundamental rule that we should respect others' freedom. While considerable scholarly work has been done exploring the

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[1]John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*, in *Two Treatises of Government and A Letter Concerning Toleration*, ed. Ian Shapiro (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2003), § 6; see also §§ 7, 8, 11, 16, 134, 135, 159, 182, 183. Hereafter this work will be cited in text as ST, by section number.

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theoretical basis of natural law, less work has been done on the practical basis, that is, on the question of how we learn natural law and learn to be guided by its obligations.[2]

Despite the centrality of natural law, the *Second Treatise* provides little guidance concerning how we come to obey it. Children are born under the authority of their parents, who have the responsibility to "inform the mind, and govern the actions of their yet ignorant nonage, till reason shall take its place" (ST 58). In other words, in addition to directing their children's actions, parents must provide the education necessary to develop their reason so that children can eventually direct their own actions. Unfortunately, Locke says almost nothing here about the content of this education. In *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, on the other hand, Locke provides us with a rich account of what he wants children to learn, and of how best to teach those lessons. It is here that we find his fullest account of how people can learn to use the obligation not to harm others as the standard for judging their own actions and those of others. A careful consideration of this education reveals, however, that it is not designed to teach obedience to the law of nature directly. Instead, it teaches obedience to the law of opinion or reputation. By balancing obedience to this law with a desire for liberty, Locke provides a practical basis for the respect for others' rights that natural law requires.

An Education for Natural Law

Locke sets four goals for the education outlined in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*: "virtue, wisdom, breeding and learning."[3] The moral education comprised by the first three goals is Locke's primary purpose, learning being the least important (STCE 147). The correlation between these character

[2]Nathan Tarcov's extensive treatment of *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, in *Locke's Education for Liberty* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), is the most notable exception. See also Mark Button, *Contract, Culture, and Citizenship: Transformative Liberalism from Hobbes to Rawls* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009), chaps. 2–3; Steven Forde, "Natural Law, Theology, and Morality in Locke," *American Journal of Political Science* 45, no. 2 (2001): 403–8, and "What Does Locke Expect Us to Know?," *Review of Politics* 68, no. 2 (2006): 232–58; Uday Singh Mehta, *The Anxiety of Freedom: Imagination and Individuality in Locke's Political Thought* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992), esp. chap. 4. Peter Myers approaches the question from a different angle, arguing that Locke's political order is itself designed to serve a pedagogical role (*Our Only Star and Compass: Locke and the Struggle for Political Rationality* [New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 1998], esp. chap. 6).

[3]Locke, *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*, in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education and Of the Conduct of the Understanding*, ed. Ruth W. Grant and Nathan Tarcov (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1996), sec. 134. Hereafter this work will be cited in text as STCE, by section number.

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traits his moral education is designed to encourage and the obligations of natural law is perhaps clearest in the case of good breeding, the basic rule of which is "*not to think meanly of ourself and not to think meanly of others*" (STCE 141). Since natural law insists on both one's own freedom and one's obligation to respect others' equal entitlement to such freedom, the quality of breeding captures the attitude proper to anyone guided by natural law.[4] In encouraging the development of an active respect for others, such breeding goes beyond the most basic statement of natural law to approach the more substantive version that requires the positive duty to ensure the preservation of humanity. His interpretation of wisdom as "a man's managing his business ably and with foresight," which he contrasts with the cunning that attempts to circumvent laws, also echoes the emphasis in the *Second Treatise* on our obligation to be productive but to do so within the constraints imposed by natural law (STCE 140; ST 34). It is, however, virtue that Locke considers "the first and most necessary of those endowments that belong to a man," and the bulk of his work is devoted to explaining how best to encourage such virtue (STCE 135; see also 70, 94). In order to understand how Locke intends to instill the tendency to follow natural law, then, we must start with his account of how to instill virtue.

The guiding principle of virtue, according to Locke, is "a power of denying ourselves the satisfaction of our own desires where reason does not authorize them" (STCE 38; see also 33, 36, 45, 52, 107, 112, 200). Given his repeated references to the need to resist desire, it is easy to equate Lockean virtue with a cold asceticism. Locke certainly lays the groundwork for the rational control of virtue in the habit of self-denial. Parents should refuse their children's demands, even "from their very cradles," so that they learn the advantages of refraining from making such demands, and "by this means they will be brought to learn the art of stifling their desires as soon as they rise up in them" (STCE 38, 107). Locke's treatment of desire, however, must be understood in the context of his account of human choice. In "Of Power," in the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke argues that all action is motivated by desire, the uneasiness we feel at some lack. The judgment that something is good is clearly insufficient on its own to prompt us to act, because we must also feel a desire for that good, and uneasiness at lacking it, in order to actively pursue it.[5] Since desire is essential for action, Locke cannot advocate teaching children to simply ignore it. Nonetheless, desire poses a danger because our actions are often determined by whatever unease we happen

[4]Forde develops this connection in depth in "Natural Law, Theology, and Morality in Locke," see esp. 403–4. See also Forde, "What Does Locke Expect Us to Know?," 254; Richard Ashcraft, *Locke's Two Treatises of Government* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1987), 43.

[5]Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975), II.xxi.35, 31, 37. Hereafter this work will be cited in text as ECHU, by book, chapter, and section number.

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to feel most strongly at that moment. We must, therefore, exert control over our actions so that they are not simply the product of immediate desire, and we have such control because we have the ability to suspend our desires before acting on them, "to examine, view, and judge, of the good or evil of what we are going to do" (ECHU II.xxi.47, 46, 69). This capacity to suspend desire and act only on the desires reason approves is "the source of all liberty" (ECHU II.xxi.47; see also 52, 67, 71).

In light of this account of choice, it becomes clear that Locke encourages self-denial not for its own sake but as a means to the liberty found in suspending one's desires long enough to consider one's actions. This liberty is the capacity for self-determination, the capacity to direct one's actions in accord with one's judgment rather than having those actions determined by mechanical forces outside one's control.[6] As such, it is a necessary condition for obedience to natural law, or to any law. Law, as "the direction of a free and intelligent agent to his proper interest," only applies to those capable of recognizing such direction and determining themselves to follow it (ST 57). When Locke says that children are not under natural law as adults are, he does not mean simply that they have not yet learned what that law requires of them; he means that they have not yet developed the capacity to order their actions in accord with any law. A child is under the authority of his parents until "he hath *attained to a state of freedom*, and his understanding be fit to take the government of his will" (ST 59).[7] The original threat to this freedom is not others' power, but the force of desire, which naturally tends to determine our actions before we bring our understanding to bear on our choices. It is only by learning to silence desire in order to judge how they should act that children realize their potential for "the *liberty* of intellectual beings" and attain the freedom they need in order to be bound by, and free under, law (ECHU II.xxi.52).

The capacity for self-determination makes possible obedience to law as such, but Locke's pedagogical goal requires more. If his education is to teach children to act in accord with natural law specifically, Locke must orient self-determination toward those obligations. This orientation emerges

[6]Some scholars read Locke's claims about self-determination as evidence he sees human beings as atomistic individuals, wholly independent of others. See, e.g., Charles Taylor's description of the "punctual self" (*Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989], 49, 160, 171–73, 192–94). Such readings require ignoring Locke's clear interest in the many ways we are shaped by our society. A less extreme interpretation of the capacity to act according to one's judgments is fully compatible with the recognition that others have enormous influence over that judgment (see, e.g., Button, *Contract, Culture, and Citizenship*, esp. 95–6, 102–4, 116, 132).

[7]Locke explicitly states that his education is intended for young men, and that it "will not so perfectly suit the education of *daughters*" (STCE 6). Although I would argue his pedagogy can easily be extended to include all human beings, I will follow his lead in referring to the child being educated as male.

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most clearly in his account of the vice to which such rational control is opposed. Parents should deny their children's desires because, even in infants, the insistence on having those desires fulfilled is evidence of an attempt to "contend for mastery" (STCE 38). The inclination to follow desire is implicitly equated with the inclination to impose one's desires on others, a connection made explicit in the discussion of the love of dominion as the origin of vice. This dangerous tendency is evident even in infants, in their desire to "have their wills," which just is the desire to "have their desires submitted to by others" (STCE 104). Even the accompanying desire for material objects seems to be based not simply in immediate physical pleasures but in the desire for the power over others that such possession grants them (STCE 105).

Our natural willfulness can express itself in two very different ways, turning outward as an attempt to master others, or inward as self-mastery. As Locke says, no other animals are "half so willful and proud or half so desirous to be masters of *themselves and others* as man" (STCE 35, emphasis mine). While the inclination to exert control over others is a vice to be avoided, Locke praises "a mind free and master of itself and all its action" as an essential part of the natural gracefulness of character that always meets with approval (STCE 66). Mastering one's desires so as to shape one's acts in accord with a rational judgment is not a neutral capacity to determine oneself in any direction. Self-mastery is the alternative to, and corrective for, the dangerous love of dominion. By teaching children to master themselves, we prevent them from mastering others.[8]

In claiming that self-mastery is the alternative to a willful insistence on one's desires, Locke aligns such mastery with the requirements of natural law. His characterization of willfulness as a love of dominion reads as an almost deliberate echo of his initial discussion of natural law in the *Second Treatise*. In the *Thoughts*, harming others is a result of the more fundamental error of attempting to exercise dominion over them. In the *Treatise,* harming others is forbidden because we do not have the kind of superiority that would justify it: "there cannot be supposed any such subordination among us, that may authorize us to destroy one another, as if we were made for one another's uses, as the inferior ranks of creatures are for ours" (ST 6). The implication in each case is that such harm is wrong not simply because of the damage it does to another but because it results from an illegitimate exercise of power. A similar echo can be found in the idea that the desire for dominion is fundamentally irrational, an enslavement to one's own

[8]For an extensive discussion of the relation between the love of liberty found in self-mastery and the desire for dominion, see Tarcov, *Locke's Education for Liberty*, esp. 8, 90, 131–36. Cf. Thomas Pangle, *The Spirit of Modern Republicanism: The Moral Vision of the American Founders and the Philosophy of Locke* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), 218, which treats the desire for dominion as a form of the desire for liberty.

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desires that leads one to make illegitimate demands. We can find in the *Second Treatise* the same equation between acting irrationally and harming others: "Reason, which is that law" tells us we should not harm others, and anyone who does commit violence "declares himself to live by another rule than that of reason" (ST 6, 8).

The *Thoughts* depends on the same assumption as the *Second Treatise*. Violating reason and succumbing to the demands of our desires results in claiming illegitimate power over others and thus violating the respect for their freedom that natural law requires. Anyone who follows reason, on the other hand, will refrain from harming others. The two works thus raise the same question: What does reason know that leads it to direct one's actions in this way rather than any other? Despite Locke's repeated insistence that it is rational to respect our obligations to others, we can all imagine an argument for pursuing our self-interest, regardless of what harm might come to others in the course of that pursuit. A full account of natural law therefore requires an explanation of why such selfish choices are not, in the end, rational ones. In the context of the practical matter of how children learn natural law, this question becomes one of what they learn that ensures that when they "purely follow what reason directs as best," such reasoning results in actions that accord with the requirements of natural law rather than violate them (STCE 33).

What Locke's Education Does Not Teach

In exploring what Locke wants children to learn, it seems appropriate to begin with what he says "reason teaches all who will but consult it" concerning our obligation to others. Our duty is first introduced as a straightforward conclusion from our basic equality: "being all *equal and independent*, no one ought to harm another." Locke then appeals to our status as created beings. Since we are products of God's work, we must recognize all human beings are his servants and even "his property, whose workmanship they are, made to last during his, not one another's pleasure." While God is presumably entitled to use us as he chooses, we are not entitled to use each other. After this religious argument, Locke returns to elaborate on his initial formulation of the law. We share certain abilities, and given this evident similarity, "there cannot be supposed any such subordination among us, that may authorize us to destroy one another" (ST 6). The argument Locke offers in the *Second Treatise*, then, derives the obligations of natural law from either our relation to God as our creator or our relation to one another as equals. This picture of morality suggests that learning natural law means learning the truth about these grounding principles and drawing the necessary conclusions about our obligations.[9] While considerable scholarly work has

[9]See also ECHU III.xi.16, IV.iii.18, IV.iv.7, IV.xii.8.

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been done tracing such arguments in Locke's other writings, however, they do not appear to be operative in the moral education he proposes in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education*.[10]

If morality follows from the idea of God, as Locke claims in the *Essay*, one might expect the proper moral education to include providing children with the necessary knowledge of God. While religion plays a role in the *Thoughts*, however, it is a surprisingly small one. He does insist that children learn the "true notion of God" and that this notion will provide a foundation for virtue (STCE 136, 139). In the brief explanation Locke offers of this "true notion" he identifies God as our creator, one who "does all manner of good to those that love and obey him" (STCE 136). The consequences of our status as products of God's workmanship, including the limits our relation to God puts on our treatment of other human beings, are never mentioned. In fact, Locke spends less time outlining what children should learn about God than he does warning against the danger of corrupting them by introducing an idea of spirits (see esp. STCE 138). Religion makes a further appearance in this education, as children are to learn "easy and plain moral rules," such as the Golden Rule, from the Bible. Such instruction comes in the context of teaching children to read, and Locke identifies a few helpful stories that can be used "both for reading and instruction together" (STCE 159). Once again,

[10]Traditional readings of Locke base natural law on our relation to God as Creator. See Ashcraft, *Locke's Two Treatises*, 35, 240; John Coleman, *John Locke's Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983), 187; Alex Tuckness, "The Coherence of a Mind: John Locke and the Law of Nature," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 37, no. 1 (1999): 82, 87; James Tully, *A Discourse on Property: John Locke and His Adversaries* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 34–36, 44–48. John Dunn argues that Lockean natural law requires a natural theology, but also that Locke fails to provide a rational defense of that theology (*The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the "Two Treatises of Government"* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969], esp. 94–95, 98–100, 187, 188). Others argue that equality provides the necessary basis, or at least that it does so when coupled with natural right. See Forde, "What Does Locke Expect Us to Know?," 235, 244, 252; Myers, *Our Only Star and Compass*, 49–51, 144; Michael Zuckert, *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 212, 214, 266; Lee Ward, "Locke on Punishment, Property, and Moral Knowledge," *Journal of Moral Philosophy* 6, no. 2 (2009): 234, 240. Cf. Jeremy Waldron's argument that Locke's idea of equality is inseparable from his Christianity (*God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke's Political Thought* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002], esp. 71–81). For arguments that natural law lacks any true foundation for Locke, see Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 202–51, esp. 220, 226–29; Richard Kennington, "Nature and Natural Right in Locke," in *On Modern Origins: Essays in Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Pamela Kraus and Frank Hunt (New York: Lexington Books, 2004), 251–70.

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however, Locke is as concerned with limiting how much of the Bible children read as he is with insisting on its pedagogical value.

Locke includes religion in this moral education, then, but less than one might expect, given the emphasis in most scholarship on the religious basis of Lockean morality. As discussed above, he opens his suggestions for education by identifying the "principle and foundation of virtue" as the self-mastery found in one's ability "to deny himself his own desires, cross his own inclinations, and purely follow what reason directs as best though the appetites lean the other way" (STCE 33; see also 38, 45). He never explains the relation between this foundation and the very different foundation of virtue in the idea of God. The only suggestion of such a relation indicates that self-mastery serves as "the proper stock whereon afterwards to graft the true principles of morality and religion," which implies that the rational direction of one's life is not based on, but rather the basis of, religious instruction (STCE 200; see also 116). More important, however, is the character of the understanding children come to have of God, and of biblical morality. The idea a child has about God is to be simply "imprinted on his mind," not developed through a reflection on experience (STCE 136). The lessons a child learns from reading the Bible have the same character, and these lessons are "thoroughly fixed in the memory" in the process of learning to read (STCE 159). The moral rules a child learns are "inculcated as the standing and sacred rules of his life and action" (STCE 159), but any belief in these rules, or in the God who stands as their basis, follows simply from familiarity, and from trust in one's parents and tutors.

Much of Locke's *Essay*, of course, is an attack on precisely the kind of unsupported assumptions on which he appears to rely here. He begins his examination into the understanding by dismantling the ideas that we assume to be innate simply because they are so familiar to us (ECHU I.ii–iii, esp. I.iii.21–27; see also I.iv.24, IV.xx.17). The work ends with an extensive discussion of how we should regulate our assent so as to ensure that our beliefs are based only on sufficient evidence (ECHU IV.xvi, xx). Nothing in the religious education Locke proposes, consisting as it does of "imprinting" and "inculcating" the ideas he wants children to have, suggests room for the kind of evaluation of evidence that could legitimately ground their belief. Locke reminds his readers of the powerful influence of custom when he remarks that the religious commitments of "the far greater part of mankind" come "rather from the fashions of their countries and the constant practice of those about them than from any conviction of their reasons" (STCE 146). Given the character of the education he proposes, the children who receive it cannot be excepted from this general rule.

If Locke does not provide children with an adequate theoretical basis for natural law in an understanding of our status as products of God's workmanship, there remains another way of grounding that law. His description of natural law in the *Second Treatise* emphasizes the basis of that law in human equality rather than in a relation to the divine. If we do not need to

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know the truth about our relation to God as our creator, it would seem that we must at least recognize our natural equality and draw the conclusion that such equality gives each of us an obligation to avoid harming others. In examining Locke's treatment of equality in the *Thoughts*, however, we find the same dynamic as with religion. Equality plays an important role in this education, but the belief in equality is not given any more rational ground than belief in God and biblical morality.

The theme of equality is perhaps even more pervasive in Locke's educational project than religious morality is. As discussed above, Locke's characterization of the desire for dominion, the root of vice, closely echoes his claims about equality in the *Second Treatise*. Insofar as the goal of a Lockean education is to prevent the natural impulse to claim power over others, that education must encourage children to treat one another as equal instead. Locke emphasizes this point by linking cruelty to an inappropriate pride in one's position. Children learn civility instead by attending to "the consideration of human nature" rather than "the shufflings of outward conditions" (STCE 117). In other words, the solution to a false pride and the resulting cruelty is to remind children of the commonalities that underlie differences in status and position. Finally, the good breeding that ranks with virtue as one of the primary goals of education depends on a "general goodwill and regard for all people" that would seem more compatible with a belief in equality than with a conviction of one's own superiority (STCE 143).

While a Lockean education encourages children to believe that people are equal, however, at no point does Locke indicate how one might lead children to anything approaching justified assent to this claim.[11] As he makes explicit in his discussion of breeding, he relies on habit rather than rational reflection to instill the desired attitude. Good breeding requires "first a disposition of the mind not to offend others; and secondly, the most acceptable and agreeable way of expressing that disposition" (STCE 143). The specific manners that will comprise this proper expression are simply a matter of custom, and thus they can only be learned through the process of imitating those one considers well bred (STCE 143, 145). The true root of such breeding, found in the good will that characterizes civility, however, is simply to be "made habitual" (STCE 143). Even this habit is limited, since the respect he wants children to show others is always colored by a reminder of differences of rank. Children are advised to be civil toward "their inferiors and the

[11]See Joseph Carrig, "Liberal Impediments to Liberal Education: The Assent to Locke," *Review of Politics* 63, no. 1 (2001): 75; Ward, "Locke on Punishment, Property, and Moral Knowledge," 244. Forde claims that "Locke's moral education bends every effort to instill the belief—or knowledge, rather – that human beings are equal," but he does not defend his move from belief to knowledge ("What Does Locke Expect Us to Know?," 252; see also 254). He subsequently concludes that, for most, Lockean morality rests on "implicit belief rather than rational knowledge" (255–56).

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meaner sort of people," and the good will he praises so highly consists not in showing equal respect for everyone but instead in showing "a respect and value for them, according to their rank and condition" (STCE 116, 143).

Locke does not offer children a rational ground for the claim that we are all equal, and the larger framework of his education actually raises important questions for that claim. In the *Second Treatise*, Locke draws the conclusion that we are equal from our possession of "equal faculties" (ST 4, 6), and one common interpretation thus locates the basis of equality in our capacity for rational choice.[12] The ability to determine one's actions in accord with one's judgment is, of course, self-mastery by another name, the very capacity Locke hopes his education will develop. That same account of education, however, indicates that the ability is rare, rather than the natural birthright of all human beings. In the *Second Treatise*, Locke is willing to assume that "we are born free as we are born rational; … age, that brings one, brings with it the other too" (ST 61). In the *Thoughts*, however, he makes clear that self-mastery is "contrary to unguided nature" (STCE 45), which is why a Lockean education is essential to its development. If education is required in order to achieve the rationality that makes us equal, of course, that equality cannot be considered simply natural. Given his repeated criticisms of the education that most receive, in fact, Locke must conclude that very few ever achieve that self-mastery, potentially undermining any claim that such rationality makes all people equal.[13]

The fundamental Lockean principle of equality can still be defended in the face of these potential problems, by basing equality on the potential for self-mastery, for example, or by recognizing differing degrees of rationality that are compatible with a basic threshold of rationality that defines our equality.[14]

[12]Forde, "What Does Locke Expect Us to Know?," 256–57; Jeffrey Reiman, "Towards a Secular Lockean Liberalism," *Review of Politics* 67, no. 3 (2005): 481–82; Myers, *Our Only Star and Compass*, 145; Michael Zuckert, *Launching Liberalism: On Lockean Political Philosophy* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 196; and Michael Zuckert, "Locke—Religion—Equality," *Review of Politics* 67, no. 3 (2005): 430.

[13]Some scholars have argued that Locke does not even expect all those who receive his preferred education to achieve full self-mastery. See Tarcov, *Locke's Education for Liberty*, 92–94; Carrig, "Liberal Impediments," esp. 48, 63. For discussion of the relation of education and equality see Tarcov, *Locke's Education for Liberty*, 72–73; Luigi Bradizza, "Elite Education and the Viability of a Lockean Society," *Review of Politics* 70, no. 4 (2008): 565.

[14]For the argument that equality is based on potential rationality see Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality*, esp. 71, and Waldron, "Response to Critics," *Review of Politics* 67, no. 3 (2005): 503. For the argument that the capacity for abstraction provides a threshold level of rationality see Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality*, 79. Others find an alternative threshold in self-ownership (Zuckert, "Locke—Religion—Equality," 431) or a minimal capacity to understand what natural law requires, even if one does not follow that law (Reiman, "Towards a Secular Lockean Liberalism," 481–82; Forde, "What Does Locke Expect Us to Know?," 257). Other scholars have argued that Locke's claims about

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And the opinions children acquire in the course of their early education may later be subject to an evaluation that justifies assent to them. In other words, the foregoing arguments are insufficient to show that equality, or God, cannot serve as the theoretical foundation for Lockean natural law. I have attempted to argue only that *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* does not teach these foundations. Insofar as it teaches a belief in natural law, a Lockean education relies on the malleability of children's ideas, not on their capacity for rational understanding. Children raised according to this method will believe in the fundamental rule that one should not harm others, but they will not do so because of an understanding of the basis of that rule. Instead, they will hold that belief simply on the basis of their parents' authority. It is not reason that gives them the obligations of natural law, but custom. Since his education is deliberately designed for children rather than adults, and as an education for gentlemen rather than scholars, it is reasonable that Locke would avoid the complex theoretical arguments that could ground their obligations. Nonetheless, the question at stake here is what he thinks people must learn in order to act according to natural law, and such education does not seem to include any understanding of the rational basis of that law.

What Locke's Education Does Teach

A Lockean education does not help children discover that they have obligations to respect others' rights because of their relation to God as products of his workmanship, nor that they have such obligations because of their relation to one another as equals. Insofar as he teaches children to follow natural law, the most Locke offers is salutary opinions designed to encourage an unthinking obedience. This does not mean, however, that his education fails to provide any rational basis for morality. Despite the fact that the *Second Treatise* gives priority to the law of nature, this law is not the only source of morality for Locke. In the *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, he defines moral good and evil as "the conformity or disagreement of our voluntary actions to some law," and proceeds to identify three different laws by which we can judge such actions (ECHU II.xxviii.5). Divine law, of which natural law is a species, is established by God and taught to us through either reason or revelation. Particular governments establish civil law, the positive law specific to each political order. Finally, the law of opinion or reputation reflects each society's customs with regard to actions they praise and criticize. Locke does not claim that custom has the same

equality are not intended to include all people. The most influential of these is C. B. Macpherson, *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962). For an extensive treatment of this debate, see Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality*, esp. chaps. 2, 4.

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obligatory force as divine or civil law. Nonetheless, in response to those who object to his treating custom as a law, he returns to his definition of law and reminds us that custom operates with a lawgiver in the form of society and sanctions in the form of public opinion (ECHU II.xxviii.12). Locke even says here that the law of opinion is generally reliable and largely reflects the divine law that he identifies as the true basis of morality (ECHU II. xxviii.11).

I have already argued that a Lockean moral education does not include much direct treatment of divine law, in the form of natural law. Locke treats civil law even more briefly, restricting his discussion to two short sections in the list of scholarly topics suitable for his gentlemanly education (STCE 186–87). This law, then, is properly part of the learning that is the least important element of his education, not part of the moral education that is its essence. Reputation, on the other hand, emerges as a central theme in the *Thoughts*. The primary innovation of Locke's educational method is his advice to "get into children a love of credit and an apprehension of shame and disgrace," by means of which one can "put into them the true principle which will constantly work and incline them to the right" (STCE 56). A reliance on reputation is "the great secret of education," and once children come to be "in love with the pleasure of being well thought on … they will be in love with all the ways of virtue" (STCE 56, 58). Locke even goes so far as to dismiss the need for an acquaintance with ethical theory in any child who has already learned "the love of reputation instead of satisfying his appetite" (STCE 185).

Reputation is not simply a tool for teaching virtue, to be dropped as children mature. By encouraging the desire for esteem, Locke effectively establishes the law of reputation as the standard by which children will distinguish good actions from bad. They learn to be liberal by learning that the child who is most generous gains "esteem and commendation," and they learn to avoid injustice by learning "an ingenious detestation of this shameful vice" (STCE 110). The difficult habit of courage results from teaching a child "to think himself made amends for his suffering by the praise [that] is given him for his courage" (STCE 115). The fact that an action will result in esteem is sufficient reason to choose it, and the fact that another will result in shame is sufficient reason to avoid it. Children are taught only the most rudimentary biblical morality, and as they learn to reflect on their actions and make judgments about what they should or should not do, they are not asked to consider whether such actions accord with God's commands, or whether such actions follow from our relation to other people as our equals. Instead, they are asked to reason about what others judge to be good, and thus about whether a particular action will result in esteem or shame. In other words, they learn to appeal directly to the law of reputation, not to natural law.

Children are taught to use society's judgments in determining their own actions, but they are not taught that society has a claim to their obedience,

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or that its dictates offer a true measure of right and wrong. In fact, Locke says the exact opposite, echoing the *Essay* by reminding us that "the true principle and measure of virtue" is not reputation but rather "the knowledge of a man's duty and the satisfaction it is to obey his Maker" (STCE 61; cf. ECHU II. xxviii.8). Insofar as a rational basis for obeying moral law depends on deriving our obligation from the legitimate authority of the lawgiver, no such rational basis can be given for the law of reputation. Locke offers another alternative for understanding the rational basis of obedience, however, one grounded not in the nature of our obligation under a particular law but instead in our motive for obeying it. When he claims that "there cannot any one moral rule be proposed whereof a man may not justly demand a reason," he proceeds to consider different arguments that would count as a reason in support of the rule that one should treat others as one wants to be treated (ECHU I.iii.4). Some would offer as sufficient reason the will of God "who has the power of eternal life and death"; others would refer to the likelihood that "the Leviathan will punish you if you do not"; and still others would insist that violating this rule is "below the dignity of a man" and thus will result in shame (ECHU I.iii.5). The reason for following a rule, in other words, depends on the motive that guides one's choice, not on an account of the theoretical basis of that rule.[15]

Since no law, however legitimate, can hope to be effective without sanctions to prompt obedience to it, "it would be in vain for one intelligent being, to set a rule to the actions of another, if he had it not in his power, to reward the compliance with, and punish deviation from his rule" (ECHU II.xxviii.6; see also I.iii.13). Morality may not be derived from self-interest, but since we always act with a view to satisfying a desire or relieving an uneasiness, moral rules can only be efficacious if obedience to them serves an individual's interest. Locke insists that "Good and evil, *reward* and *punishment*, are the only motives to a rational creature" (STCE 53).[16] Reward and punishment are integral to the very idea of law, and to give a rational account of why one should follow a law one must explain the reward and punishment that offer the appropriate motives. When he insists parents should reason with their children, Locke does not intend for them to give long arguments deducing morality from basic premises. Instead, a parent is simply to provide "such motives as may be sufficient to convince them," and the primary

[15]James Tully argues that the motive provides the theoretical basis, serving as a ground from which the practical principle of one's actions can be deduced ("Governing conduct: Locke on the reform of thought and behavior," in *An Approach to Political Philosophy: Locke in Contexts* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993], 214).

[16]Cf. scholars who claim that children will eventually make the transition from a love of esteem to a love of virtue for its own sake (Forde, "What Does Locke Expect Us to Know?," 404, 408; Coleman, *John Locke's Moral Philosophy*, 233).

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reason to refrain from any particular action is "that it will be a discredit and disgrace to them" (STCE 81).

If we look for a rational basis for the law of reputation in the form of a motive for obeying it, we find that Locke does provide one, and a much firmer one than he provides for obeying natural law. In addition to teaching children that they will earn a good reputation for virtuous actions, Locke advises parents to encourage the desire for a good reputation in the first place. This process includes instilling an unquestioned habit, similar to the habit of belief in God and equality, but Locke also encourages a degree of rational reflection in this case that is missing in the others. While children care about esteem earlier than we usually recognize, we can teach them that they should want it even more by making clear the ensuing benefits: "to make the sense of esteem or disgrace sink the deeper and be of the more weight, other agreeable or disagreeable things should constantly accompany these different states" (STCE 58). In fact, Locke insists that children should receive benefits only as a result of esteem, so that the reward will be linked clearly to their reputation, rather than to a single action (STCE 53). Children thus learn to choose actions that will gain them esteem because they are "brought to conceive that those that are commended and in esteem for doing well will necessarily be beloved and cherished by everybody and *have all other good things as a consequence of it*" (STCE 58, emphasis mine). Locke makes use of the appeal to honor that was traditionally a part of moral education, but by encouraging a reflection on the rewards that accompany esteem and the punishments that accompany shame, he transforms this appeal. Children do not simply learn to want a good reputation; they learn to see reputation as a law, and they learn through experience their motive for obeying that law.[17]

Most scholars argue that, for Locke, the divine sanctions of eternal reward and punishment provide the necessary motivation for morality. Even scholars who downplay or discount the religious basis of morals often claim that Locke relies on religion as offering the motive required to make moral law efficacious.[18] In his education, however, it is the sanctions of reputation that play the fundamental role. He does not completely ignore the motive provided by a divine judge, referring more than once to the advantages of

[17]For a discussion of Locke's transformation of traditional humanism into a "juridical apparatus," see Tully, "Governing conduct," 210, 224–25.

[18]Forde, "Natural Law, Theology, and Morality in Locke," 398–400; Greg Forster, *John Locke's Politics of Moral Consensus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5, 216, 260; Myers, *Our Only Star and Compass*, 49, 50, 137; Zuckert, *Launching Liberalism*, 14. A few scholars recognize that Locke offers esteem as an alternative to the otherworldly motive of an afterlife (Pangle, *Spirit of Modern Republicanism*, 201–3; Tarcov, *Locke's Education for Liberty*, 104). Kennington goes further, arguing that Locke questions not only the theoretical truth of Christianity but even its effectiveness ("Nature and Natural Law in Locke," 262).

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obeying God (STCE 61, 136). The reference to an eternal reward is always kept implicit, however, and the idea of eternal punishment for violating God's law is surprisingly absent. In addition, Locke makes no attempt to give children evidence of the existence of eternal reward or punishment.[19] The reward and punishment children actually see, on the basis of which they make their choices, is always a matter of esteem and shame.

In his comparison of the three forms of moral law, Locke offers some indication of why he might rely on the motivation of esteem and shame, rather than on divine reward and punishment. He repeatedly insists that divine law provides "the only true touchstone of *moral rectitude*," but he also recognizes that the law of opinion proves to be the most effective law, and most people "govern themselves chiefly, if not solely, by this law of fashion" (ECHU II.xxviii.8, 12). We convince ourselves that we can escape civil punishment by escaping detection, which means civil law does not offer sufficient motive. Since divine punishment is eternal, Locke claims that it is always rational to obey God, but he also admits that most of us either fail to think about the distant possibility of divine judgment or believe we can make amends for any sins at a later date (ECHU II.xxviii.12; cf. II.xxi.70). Very few people, on the other hand, are willing to risk society's displeasure by violating the standards it upholds. As he puts it in the *Thoughts*, "Esteem and disgrace are, of all others, the most powerful incentives to the mind" (STCE 56; see also 60). While the law of reputation may have the shakiest theoretical foundation of the three moral laws, in other words, it has the strongest practical effect. In a practical work aimed at guiding children's actions, Locke relies on this most effective of motivations.

The law of reputation clearly plays a central role in a Lockean education. Children learn to distinguish right and wrong according to what is praised and criticized, and they learn to be motivated by the reward of esteem and punishment of shame. Despite the effectiveness of this law, however, Locke's choice to teach children to follow it is puzzling, in light of the importance of natural law elsewhere in his work. The law of reputation and the law of nature may often correspond, but Locke is well aware that such alignment is not inevitable, which means that custom can deviate significantly from natural law.[20] Even when the prevailing customs support natural law, a

[19]Even in his more theoretical works, it is unclear whether Locke considers evidence of divine sanctions possible. A number of scholars point to the absence of a defense of Locke's theological claims, many arguing that this absence is due to Locke's own recognition of the impossibility of such a defense: see Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality*, 99, 102; Forde, "What Does Locke Expect Us to Know?," 235; Dunn, *Political Thought of John Locke*, 188; Zuckert, "Locke—Religion—Equality," 423, and *Natural Rights and the New Republic*, 211.

[20]As Locke reminds us, even heinous violence against innocents meets with praise in some societies and, conversely, the actions we praise as virtuous are condemned by others (ECHU I.iii.9–10). Parents can dictate which actions earn esteem only in the

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more significant problem remains. Locke's politics requires citizens who will determine themselves in accord with the obligations of natural law. By producing children inclined to obey the law of opinion, it would seem that his education instead results in citizens who will allow themselves to be determined by others' judgments. This discussion began with the question of how we learn the respect for freedom that is essential to natural law. Understanding Locke's use of reputation requires understanding how such a means is compatible with that larger goal.

Reputation and the "Great Secret of Education"

A recognition of the significance of reputation in Locke's *Thoughts* reveals an important tension at the heart of his work. Insofar as children learn submission to others' judgment rather than reliance on their own, Locke's pedagogical project appears to undermine the freedom his political project requires.[21] Any consideration of this issue, however, must begin with a recognition of the essential role of the desire for liberty in a Lockean education. In arguing for the need for a new educational approach, Locke's focus is on the tendency of children to become willful, harming others in the service of their desires. The discussion of self-mastery so far has emphasized how his pedagogical method is designed to restrain this willfulness by encouraging obedience to the law of reputation. Willfulness is not the only danger, however, and he also warns us of the risk that children will have their spirits broken, becoming listless and useless (STCE 46, 51). Given the emphasis he puts on industry throughout his writings, such spiritless children may even pose a greater danger than willful ones.[22] To be in control of oneself requires that one restrain one's desire so as to avoid imposing on others. It also requires, however, that one's actions result from one's own choices rather than being imposed by others. True self-mastery thus requires that children avoid inappropriate submission to others as well as inappropriate domination of them.

carefully controlled environment of the home, and, even here, this preferred standard is continually under threat from competing opinions held by other members of the household (STCE 59, 68–69).

[21]See Mehta, *Anxiety of Freedom*, esp. 153–54, 158, 164–65, 173; Barry Hindess, *Discourses of Power: From Hobbes to Foucault* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), 74–75, 77–79, 84. For the argument that this tension exists but is not irresolvable, see Button, *Contract, Culture, and Citizenship*, esp. 165–68; Duncan Ivison, *The Self at Liberty: Political Argument and the Arts of Government* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), chaps. 4–5, esp. p. 119.

[22]See Tarcov, *Locke's Education for Liberty*, 98, 101. See also Myers's description of self-government as a middle ground between dominion and submission (*Our Only Star and Compass*, 192–94).

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Locke pairs children's natural love of liberty with their natural desire for dominion (STCE 103), but while the latter should be suppressed as far as possible, his education is designed to encourage the former. Locke insists that his readers recognize that "children have as much a mind to show that they are free, that their own good actions come from themselves, that they are absolute and independent, as any of the proudest of you grown men" (STCE 73). Rather than subdue this desire for independence and self-determination, parents should make use of it. Indeed, this desire to be treated as rational "[is] a pride should be cherished in them and, as much as can be, made the great instrument to turn them by" (STCE 81). Children should be given the freedom to pursue any harmless form of recreation that they choose. More importantly, to encourage them in the pursuit of more serious studies, they are to be taught to see those studies as a form of freely chosen play (STCE 108, 74, 76; see also 128, 206–9).

For Locke, self-mastery has two aspects: restraint and liberty. The interplay between these aspects is clearest in his treatment of the obedience children owe their parents. Since he claims that children should learn absolute obedience to their parents, it may seem that Locke is teaching them to be submissive rather than to insist on their freedom (STCE 40–44, 100).[23] Despite his general disapproval of corporal punishment, Locke goes so far as to argue that disobedience that arises from obstinacy should be met with a beating sufficiently severe to prevent any future resistance to parental authority (STCE 78–79). He is careful, however, to distinguish the "open defiance" of such obstinacy from more common careless mistakes (STCE 79; see also 78, 80). Obstinacy is characterized as a willful insistence on one's own desires, and the extremity of Locke's suggested response is a result of the danger posed by the incipient desire for dominion. Parents should win any contest of mastery, because the alternative is to teach their children to master others. Opposition to one's child is only necessary, however, in those cases in which they act from desire. As soon as reason begins to speak in them, parents should relax their authority (STCE 108; see also 10, 41, 95). Children thus learn self-control in part because doing so guarantees them more freedom from direct control by their parents: "the enjoyment of their dearly beloved freedom will be no small encouragement to them" (STCE 76). In his treatment of obedience, then, Locke is appealing to and encouraging both self-control and the love of liberty.

If Locke is to maintain this delicate balance, the limits that prevent willful dominion must be compatible with the essential desire for liberty. While Locke insists on the importance of both elements of self-mastery, however, they do not work together in a seamless harmony. Instead, Locke warns us, it is very difficult to adequately develop both at the same time, to "keep up a child's spirit easy, active, and free and yet at the same time to restrain

[23]Carrig, "Liberal Impediments," 52, 54; Mehta, *Anxiety of Freedom*, 137–38, 142.

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him from many things he has a mind to and draw him to things that are uneasy to him" (STCE 46). The proper balance is so difficult to achieve that Locke concludes that "he … that knows how to reconcile these seeming contradictions has in my opinion got *the true secret of education*" (STCE 46, emphasis mine).

The need for a balance between liberty and restraint is clearly of a piece with Locke's treatment of natural law in the *Second Treatise*. Locke introduces that law with a reminder that our natural state is one of liberty, "yet it is not a state of license" (ST 6). Our freedom is always limited by natural law. What is striking, however, is the character of the restraint on which Locke relies in his educational work. He teaches children to see the limits on their actions not in terms of a rational understanding of the obligations of natural law but instead in terms of the standards of esteem and shame. Rather than teaching children to rely on their own judgment about what the law of nature requires, in other words, he sees the need for the external restraint characteristic of the law of reputation. He does claim that children learn to obey others' judgment as a training for eventually obeying their own (STCE 61; see also 41), but this transition to one's own judgment is undermined by the law of opinion. Even as adults, they will continue to determine their actions primarily by reference to what will gain them esteem or shame, which means they will be guided more by others' conception of natural law than by their own.[24]

For Locke, however, the move to rely on the standard of reputation does not mean simply sacrificing liberty for the sake of control. Instead, he treats the appeal to reputation as the best means for resolving the inherent tension between freedom and restraint. Having said that the reconciliation of these apparently incompatible demands is "the true secret of education," he proceeds to describe the proper use of reputation as "*the great secret of education*" (STCE 46, 56). The clear echo between these claims indicates that Locke considers the restraint imposed by the desire for esteem to be the proper balance to the demands of the desire for liberty.

Locke does not tell us why the law of reputation might offer a better corrective for the potential dangers of freedom than a direct appeal to the law of nature would, but the answer may lie in the particular nature of the threat posed by the desire for liberty, the danger that such desire might instead become the desire for dominion. Locke encourages children to see themselves as capable of directing their own lives rationally and entitled to do so without interference, because such self-assertion ensures that children will demand respect for their own self-determination. Self-assertion, however, does not naturally extend to respect for others' assertion of their rights. Children learn that they should not let others treat them as inferiors, but this does not mean they will consider others their equals. If they are not also convinced

[24]See Hindess, *Discourses of Power*, 74–75, 84; Mehta, *Anxiety of Freedom*, 31, 146, 153–54.

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of others' rationality, they may instead conclude they are superior to their peers.[25] Locke recognizes our inclination to overestimate our own capacity for reason, and to underestimate that of others: "We are all Quakers here, and there is not a man but thinks he alone hath this light within and all besides stumble in the dark."[26] The claim that one's own freedom is founded in the most basic capacity for self-determination may logically require recognition that all humans share this capacity and thus the consequent freedom. Even if a child is willing to follow the implications of his self-assertion to their logical conclusion, however, such logic rarely affects one's actions, because it supplies insufficient motive.[27] If it is not coupled with a concern for others' rights, the desire for liberty can lead children to assert their own rights at others' expense.

Locke recognizes the need for restraint to balance the desire for liberty, and a restraint that adequately addresses the key danger of this desire must provide a motive for respecting others' liberty. In other words, in addition to encouraging the self-assertion inherent in the desire for liberty, Locke's education must encourage children to move from that self-assertion to a respect for others' similar self-assertion. Since it is easier to convince a child that he is rational than to convince him that others are, such restraint must also provide him with a motive for respecting others' self-assertion, whether he agrees with their judgment of themselves or not. This account of the problem Locke must address points to an explanation of why he turns to reputation for a solution. The desire for a good reputation supplies the missing connection, because we have a motive to care what others think of themselves, insofar as we care what they think of us.

A child shaped by Locke's education learns to see himself as rational and free, and he will therefore expect others to treat him accordingly. As a consequence, he will only praise those who show him the respect he thinks he deserves. At the same time, he wants the respect of his peers. If they have also had a Lockean education and thus see themselves as rational and free, he must draw the obvious conclusion about what they expect from him. Regardless of his own judgment about them, he knows that he can only gain their esteem if he shows them the respect they think they deserve. Such a child may very well consider himself superior to others, but he will still conclude that he should treat them as if they are entitled to the same right to determine their own lives that he claims for himself. This conclusion only requires him to recognize that others will demand such respect and a compelling motive to honor that demand. By providing this motive, the

[25]I am indebted to an anonymous reviewer for this point.

[26]Letter to Tom, 20 October 1659, in John Locke, *Political Writings*, ed. David Wootton (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2003), 140.

[27]See Zuckert's discussion of the basis of natural law, and the practical limits of these obligations, at *Launching Liberalism*, 196.

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desire for esteem provides the necessary restraint that prevents the desire for liberty from becoming a desire for mastery.[28]

Locke incorporates the dynamic of reciprocal esteem in his discussion of how to prevent children from developing the habit of cruelty. As a means to encourage the humanity that will prevent such cruelty, Locke recommends that children be taught to treat others, especially "their inferiors and the meaner sort of people," civilly (STCE 117). If children are willing to show these "inferiors" such respect, they will lose none of their authority over others, and in fact others will esteem them more and therefore be more willing to submit to that authority (STCE 117). While this short passage has been cited as evidence of Locke's commitment to the idea of equality, the repeated references to superiors and inferiors could suggest the opposite.[29] Locke is clearly recommending the advantages of showing others the esteem they expect, however, even if we do not consider them our equals. He reinforces these recommendations by advising parents to treat their children as rational, despite the fact that the structure of parental authority depends on recognizing they are not in fact rational (STCE 54, 81; see also 71).[30] His suggestion is based in part on the claim that showing children such respect is the best way to gain their respect in return. Parents thus model for their children the behavior they are trying to instill.[31]

The "great secret" of reputation does not provide a perfect reconciliation between the competing demands of liberty and restraint. The desire for esteem provides an important corrective for the tendency to assert one's liberty at others' expense, but it also requires at least some sacrifice of one's own self-determination in the interest of following others' judgments instead. Locke mitigates this concern by encouraging a deliberate reflection on the advantages of being guided by others' opinions. When one decides that the rewards of esteem outweigh the pleasures of asserting one's own position instead, one is, in some sense, retaining one's independent judgment in

[28]Tarcov makes a similar argument, claiming that the desire for esteem replaces the desire for mastery (*Locke's Education for Liberty*, 137, 139). On his interpretation a child retains the desire to control others, simply finding a more effective means to that end. While this is clearly part of Locke's goal, I am arguing that he intends to go further, providing a limit to that desire for control.

[29]See Bradizza, "Elite Education," 548, 560; Uday Singh Mehta, *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 62–63; Tarcov, *Locke's Education for Liberty*, 170–71. Cf. Forde, "What Does Locke Expect Us to Know?," 252, and "Natural Law, Theology, and Morality in Locke," 403.

[30]Cf. Ashcraft, *Locke's Two Treatises of Government*, 104, who reads Locke's statements as a claim that children are entitled to such treatment, rather than as a pedagogical suggestion.

[31]For a discussion of the reciprocal nature of esteem, see Tarcov, *Locke's Education for Liberty*, 137–39.

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choosing to act as custom dictates.[32] Even if obedience to the law of reputation allows for such critical distance, however, Locke's reliance on custom calls into question any claim that his education produces fully autonomous citizens.[33] Insofar as his goal is to produce citizens with the ability and inclination to choose their actions in accord with the basic rule of respecting others' rights, on the other hand, the delicate balance his education achieves appears sufficient.

I have argued that the love of reputation does the work of transforming a child's inclination to insist on his own liberty into a motive to show respect for the same insistence on the part of others. If this reading of Locke is correct, his project is still vulnerable to the criticism that his dependence on the law of reputation leaves children subject to changes in custom. A desire for esteem results in respect for others' rights only if others demand such respect in the first place. Whether the law of reputation encourages citizens to act in accord with natural law thus depends on whether a society happens to encourage the desire for liberty.[34] Despite Locke's repeated warnings about the danger of relying on a standard as variable as that of custom, however, he also recognizes the power inherent in that variability. In the journal entry "Credit, disgrace," he repeats his claims about the force of custom in most people's lives, and he concludes that anyone who wants to govern well should "consider rather what fashions he makes than what laws."[35] In

[32]Some scholars have rejected the idea that even this degree of independence is available in Locke's account, given the difficulty of questioning the opinions we acquire when young. See Mehta, *Anxiety of Freedom*, 115–18, 153–54, 158, 160, 162, 164–65; Hindess, *Discourses of Power*, esp. 18, 74–75, 84–85.

[33]For a discussion of the extent to which Locke's reliance on custom undermines autonomy, see Button, *Contract, Culture, and Citizenship*, esp. 116, 132, 149, 165–68; Carrig, "Liberal Impediments," 58–59, 70; Hindess, *Discourses of Power*, esp. chap. 3; Mehta, *Anxiety of Freedom*, esp. chap. 4. Cf. Alex Neill, "Locke on Habituation, Autonomy, and Education," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 27, no. 2 (1989): 225–45, which argues that habit has a valuable role in making even epistemic autonomy possible.

[34]Whether this law encourages citizens to treat *all* members of society as equally entitled to full rights under natural law also depends on whether that society encourages the desire for liberty and the consequent demand for respect in all its members. In a society that simply assumes women, or the working class, are not entitled to such respect, treating those groups as subordinate may not harm one's reputation. Regardless of Locke's own position on universal human equality (see footnote 14 above), his education leaves the motive for treating others as equal vulnerable to these changes in custom.

[35]John Locke, "Credit, disgrace," in *Political Writings*, 237. See also John Dunn's argument that Locke's transformative education is guided by a rational goal instead of irrational custom ("'Bright Enough for All Our Purposes': John Locke's Conception of a Civilized Society," *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* 43, no. 2 [1989]: 142).

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other words, he understands the efficacy of custom, and he also insists on the possibility of forming customs rather than simply following them.

To complete his pedagogical project, then, Locke knows he must aim to establish customs that will serve to support natural law rather than undermine it. His treatment of the desire for liberty is an essential part of this project. Other scholars have already noted that *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* does more to flatter the desire to be thought rational than it does to actually make children rational.[36] Children learn to see themselves as self-determined, carefully weighing alternatives and choosing the best one, and Locke encourages this belief despite clear indications that this self-determination is never as absolute as we might like to believe. Far from indicating a flaw in Locke's work, however, we should recognize such flattery as a deliberate use of the power of custom: "Since we are all, even from our cradles, vain and proud creatures, let their vanity be flattered with things that will do them good" (STCE 119). Respect for others' rights, the essential element of Lockean natural law, emerges from the specific combination of the love of liberty and love of esteem that his education instills.[37]

If Lockean politics is to succeed, the requirement that citizens be guided by natural law cannot amount to the requirement that they all in fact determine their actions as a result of rational reflection, much less that they do so in light of a rational understanding of the obligations of that law. Locke clearly understands how difficult the true self-determination of rational self-mastery is, and how rarely we attain it. Even in the *Second Treatise*, where he is at his most optimistic about our ability to achieve sufficient rationality to follow natural law, he warns that passion will prevent the fair exercise of that law, compelling us to leave the state of nature and establish unbiased judges (ST 13). Locke does not expect most people to regularly suspend their desires in order to judge according to the true morality of natural law, and the innovations of his educational method are not intended to change human nature sufficiently to ensure that we all achieve such rationality. He can, however, expect most people to learn to see themselves as rational and to learn to care enough about their reputations to see the consequent advantages of respecting others' claims to the same rationality. The love of esteem, when coupled with the love of liberty, is a more powerful motive for respecting others than reason alone can hope to offer. Locke's education, with a love of reputation as its cornerstone, is thus designed to provide precisely the practical ground that his politics requires.

[36]Carrig, "Liberal Impediments," 53–55; Tarcov, *Locke's Education for Liberty*, 94, 119.

[37]Tarcov claims that, for Locke, "what is practically decisive is not rationality itself but the common passion or desire to be thought rational and to have one's freedom" (*Locke's Education for Liberty*, 94). The argument of this section can be read in part as a gloss on that claim.

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