

The Problem of Human Equality in Locke's Political Philosophyⁱ

Introduction: The Political Character of Human Equality

How can men be equal vis-à-vis each other if one cannot legitimately determine “what a *Man* is” or assemble a “class” of human beings?ⁱⁱ

In *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke asserts the impossibility of formulating a naturalistic definition of “man” or the human “species.” From an empirical point of view, the infinite number of real, internal and external differences among men precludes our settling upon a single definition that encompasses all beings traditionally defined as “human.” Nature supplies only “particular beings” and things, thus assembling a collection of either under a species label reflects only humans’ need to impose order on a world lacking natural “essences.” Throughout the *Essay*, Locke consistently rejects the Aristotelian-Scholastic notion that nature produces readily discernible “kinds,” “sorts,” or “categories” of things; divisions employed for separating humans from the remainder of the natural world exist for convenience’s sake and represent merely the pragmatic partitioning of a world of particular phenomena. The “species” category “man” is an historical artifact subject to redefinition and reconfiguration, rather than something that inheres in nature.

The implications of Locke’s empiricism appear to clash with the unperturbed discussion of “man” and “species” present in the *Second Treatise of Government*, where Locke theorizes on the assumption that humans a) are clearly distinguishable from the rest of natural things and b) enjoy a state of equality vis-à-vis one another. He declares near the beginning of the *Second Treatise*: The “state all men are naturally in” is one of “*perfect freedom*” and equality, “no one having more [power and jurisdiction] than another....” Men enjoy this equality as “creatures of the same species and rank,” fashioned by the “one omnipotent, and infinitely wise maker” to

have dominion over the “inferior ranks” of Creation while partaking equally in the advantages of nature afforded members of the highest species—the only species made in the image of God.ⁱⁱⁱ As creatures equally free yet equally subject to the strictures of God’s moral order, human beings, as agents “about his business,” have a right to a certain level of consideration from others and a duty to “attend” seriously to rights of similar beings.^{iv} Although Locke appeals primarily to reason when describing the formation and maintenance of human societies,^v he invokes the Scriptures both implicitly and explicitly “when we come upon the normative creaturely equality of all men in virtue of their shared species-membership.”^{vi}

Lockean epistemology proscribes the type of justification Locke supplies in the *Second Treatise* for equality and reciprocity among men in the state of nature, namely, that individuals are to be considered “creatures of the same species and rank.” As the Cambridge “historical” interpretation of Locke nicely illustrates, it is tempting to crystallize the apparent differences between the *Essay* and the *Second Treatise*.^{vii} The texts reflexively resist an approach that considers them together, and the aforementioned “species” example represents only one of many available to demonstrate the incompatibility of the two works. Nevertheless, an examination of the *Essay* will demonstrate how Locke attends carefully, if sparingly, to the ethical and political implications of the rather “thoroughgoing” skepticism bred by his empirical method.^{viii} He emerges the bearer of a more-or-less-coherent philosophical position, though he deliberately exempts certain foundational elements of politics and morality from the reach of his “anthropological relativism” concerning “species” and ethics.^{ix}

Locke allows in the *Essay* that while a human “essence” as such does not exist, it may and should be assumed for practical reasons, primarily as a means of securing social stability and peace. “Man” and “species” as depicted by the *Second Treatise* are just such “supposition[s],” a

being and a collection of beings, respectively, about which an assumption must be made in order for society to function.^x Similarly, the ethical and moral codes that bind “man” or “the species” lack a foundation in the nature of things. In terms of Lockean epistemology, I argue that equality, as an attribute of the human “species,” persists alongside “justice,” “gratitude,” and “obligation,” as a “mixed mode,” or a “fleeting, and transient [Combination] of simple Ideas” that “does not always exist together in Nature.”^{xi} Put another way, like the abstract idea of “justice,” equality comes into being historically, in response to the specific impressions on and reflections of a mind or number of minds.^{xii} Deriving “Unity from an Act of the Mind,” not from nature, it lacks a “steady existence.” “[T]he greatest part of the Words made use of in Divinity, Ethicks, Law, and Politicks,” are mixed modes.^{xiii} Though the content of our moral language is “perfectly *arbitrary*,” Locke insists that we clearly define that content for reasons which parallel his call to “suppose” a human “essence.”^{xiv}

The *Second Treatise* proceeds on the assumption that “equality” is a fundamental feature of the “human” condition; however, that notions of “man” and “equality” operate thus in Lockean politics in no way signals their “real Being” according to the standards established by Lockean epistemology.^{xv} The thinking, feeling being of the *Essay* is *not* the resident of the state of nature, but this “contradiction” stems from Locke’s political prudence, rather than from his philosophical inconsistency.

Finally, the conception of “man” present in the *Second Treatise* is deeply entangled in a certain understanding of the Christian tradition. However, an analysis of the situation of “God” in Locke’s epistemology will confirm that He, like conceptions of “man” and “equality,” is a “supposition” useful for the maintenance of social order. If it is practically necessary to make assumptions about the nature of “man,” grounding those assumptions in a certain type of

divinely created being is *one* reasonably benign way to confront this necessity. Nonetheless, the coming together of this cluster of “suppositions” in the *Second Treatise* does not indicate that Locke thought they were the *correct* assumptions to deduce from an empirical survey of phenomena. They were the assumptions prevalent in the England of Locke’s time, and the *Essay* confirms that he was clearly aware of their *historical* character. His adoption of them in the *Second Treatise* is a self-conscious, *political* move.

In defending this reading of Locke, I will consider powerful alternative readings by Jeremy Waldron and Michael Zuckert,^{xvi} both of whom admit Locke’s skepticism about “man” and “species” yet conclude, for quite different reasons, that Lockean equality is still “natural.”

The Status of “Man” and “Species” in the *Essay*

Locke’s denial of a natural human “species” follows from his empirical observations of individual “beings.”^{xvii} Starting from the premise that “all our *Ideas*” originate in either sensory experience or subsequent reflection on it, Locke concludes that nature produces only “particular beings.” The fluid material composition of these “particular beings” implies that, when “considered...in themselves,” we will find “every thing...*essential* to [them], or which is more true, nothing at all.”^{xviii} Examination of individual “beings” reveals no unchanging “essence,” no essential “Quality” or combination of qualities that is “inseparable” from an individual “being,” much less one that is held in common by a class or “species” of “beings.”^{xix} Because individual beings lack “essences,” “particular Being[s]” acquire “essential” properties only after “the Mind refers [them] to some Sort or *Species* of things; and then presently, according to the abstract *Idea* of that sort, something is found *essential*.”^{xx} Locke readily applies this general analysis of “beings” to human “beings.” For a “particular Being” “to be counted of the sort *Man*,” an established definition of “man” regulates which beings do and do not fall under that category.^{xxi}

Our actual use of “species” language, Locke argues, obscures the “ontological” reality of the universe—that one finds in nature only “particular beings” and “no Chasms, or Gaps” whereby “kinds” of beings or things can be readily distinguished from one another.^{xxii}

Given the particularity of “beings,” Locke sets out “to consider...what the Sorts and Kinds, or, if you rather like the Latin names, *what the Species and Genera of Things* are; wherein they consist; and how they come to be made.”^{xxiii} Contrary to the “usual supposition...that there are certain precise *Essences* or *Forms* of Things” that correspond to our use of “general” terminology, the classification of beings as human or non-human, simple or complex, low or high, derives not from nature, but from a pragmatic need to impose order on a “continued series” of particular beings and things “that...differ very little from one another.”^{xxiv} (E.g. “There are some Brutes, that seem to have as much Knowledge and Reason, as some that are called Men,” just as “a *Foetus in the Mother’s Womb...differs not much from the State of a Vegetable.*”^{xxv}) In the case of “man,” nature supplies no “boundary” for the human “species”; rather, “we our selves divide [particular beings or things], by certain obvious appearances, into *Species*, that we may the easier, under general names, communicate our thoughts about them.”^{xxvi} Thus the “essence” of “man” or the human “species” rises not from nature, but from the conferral or “annex[ation] of “the name Man” to a certain set of properties—“voluntary Motion, with Sense and Reason, join’d to a Body of a certain shape”--which have no necessary connection in “the real Nature of Things.”^{xxvii}

Nature affords at best only rough parameters for determining “what a *Man* is” or what a human “species” might look like, causing conceptions of “man” and “species” to vary over time and space. However, for purposes of “Discourse, Conversation, Instruction, and Society,” our ideas about “man,” Locke argues, require a stable meaning, even though “none of the Definitions

of the word *Man*, which we yet have...are so perfect and exact as to satisfie a considerate inquisitive person....^{xxxviii} Because he cannot defend the epistemological primacy of a particular conception, Locke recommends “stead[y]” adherence to *an* established definition of “man.”^{xxxix}

For supposing a rational Spirit to be the *Idea* of a *Man*, ‘tis easie to know, what is the *same Man*, viz. the *same Spirit*, whether separate or in a Body will be the *same Man*. Supposing a rational Spirit vitally united to a Body of a certain conformation of Parts to make a *Man*, whilst that rational Spirit, with that vital conformation of Parts, though continued in a fleeting successive Body, remains, it will be the *same Man*. But if to any one the *Idea* of a *Man* to be, but the vital union of Parts in a certain shape...[so long as this is the case]...it will be the *same Man*. For whatever be the composition whereof the complex *Idea* is made, whenever Existence makes it one particular thing under any denomination, the same Existence continued, preserves it the same individual under the same denomination.^{xxx}

While the continual application of a single “species” definition facilitates society, such also obscures the “man-made” origin of the “species.” When certain ideas—such as reason and a particular shape—“go constantly together” with an established conception of “man” or “species,” men often “suppose some *Substratum*, wherein [these ideas] do subsist, and from which they do result, which therefore we call Substance.”^{xxxxi} Such an error on the part of the masses is typically innocuous, if not salutary—for it reinforces the present definition of “man”—though for those concerned with actual knowledge, it represents a regression rather than an advance.

The *Essay*’s explicit attack on the “usual supposition” concerning “species”—that divisions inhere in nature (Lockean “real Essences,” Aristotelian natural kinds, Platonic forms)—sounds of anti-essentialism and anti-realism. The only “Essences of the *Species*” Locke affirms “are of Men’s making,” and the “essence” of “man” may assume different forms across time and space—no one more legitimate than another.^{xxxii} However, Locke also acknowledges that the “Mind, in making its complex *Ideas* of Substances [such as “man”], only follows Nature,” who, “in the constant production of particular Beings, makes them not always new and

various ideas.”^{xxxiii} Admissions of this sort obviously raise the question of whether Locke concedes, on some level, a nature that classifies.

I follow W.L. Uzgalis in arguing that Locke’s “anti-essentialism” goes all the way down to the level of “real Essence,” or “internal frame and Constitution,” keeping intact his objection to the “Aristotelian-Scholastic” notion of natural species or kinds. Claims about “real resemblances” among particular beings and similarities in “internal frame and Constitution” indicate that, on Locke’s view, we can make more or less useful classifications of phenomena; however, as Jeremy Waldron observes in his excellent discussion of this topic,^{xxxiv} “The pragmatic idea of an improvement in our nominal classifications is entirely relative to our purposes in making such classifications.”^{xxxv} Rather, in the realm of “natural Things,” “a continuous distribution of different properties” (i.e. no two natural things are constituted in exactly the same manner) demonstrates that, even at the level of “real essence,” “it is impossible to find non-arbitrary boundaries of the species.”^{xxxvi} Locke’s analogy between the internal workings of different men and those of different timepieces illustrates the failure of detailed knowledge of “internal constitutions” to reveal a natural classification scheme. Even if man could, as is possible with different sorts of timepieces, obtain full knowledge of the inner workings of different human beings, including those considered “monsters,” he would realize that in men, as in watches, “[E]ach of these hath a real difference from the rest: But whether it be an essential, a specifick difference or no, relates only to the complex *Idea*, to which the name *Watch* [or *Man*] is given....”^{xxxvii} Thus Man’s inability to classify nature in accordance with “internal Constitutions” does not result from the weakness of his faculties, from his inability to gain epistemic access pre-existing natural categories.

Scholars who consider Locke's denial of "real Essences" a problem of "epistemic access" rather than a "thoroughgoing" anti-realism generally ignore his deliberate anti-essentialism concerning the "real Essences" of substances.^{xxxviii} Richard Ashcraft, Arthur Lovejoy, and J.L. Mackie contend that Locke's use of general categories assumes on some level a nature that classifies.

For Ashcraft, in spite of the fact that man cannot intellectually apprehend the "substance" or "substratum" to which various things belong, Locke assumes such a concept to underpin the operations of a divinely ordered universe.^{xxxix} As Locke routinely suggests, humans can scarcely fathom the intent and "Workmanship" of the Almighty, which "exceeds the Capacity and Comprehension of the most inquisitive and intelligent Man...we in vain pretend to range Things into sorts...by their *real Essences*, that are so far from our discovery or comprehension."^{xl} On this view, Locke attributes humans' limited understanding of the natural world to the "dull[ness]" of their faculties when contrasted with the omniscience of the "Architect" of the universe.^{xli} His emphasis on the "meagerness of human knowledge" is designed to orient individuals toward a recognition of their relative weakness, "to inspire, not skepticism, but reverence."^{xlii} Exposing the failure of human reason, Locke's epistemology complements rather than contradicts his Calvinist belief in the depravity of man. By detailing the deployment of "the God-given powers of the mind," Locke intends to display the necessity, for Christians, of philosophizing in tandem with the Holy Scriptures.^{xliii} This understanding of Locke admits that human efforts to classify can correspond more or less with categories inherent in nature.^{xliv}

In *The Great Chain of Being*, Arthur Lovejoy also contends that from Lockean "real essences" "arise class concepts of which the definitions are inherent in the nature of things, not arbitrary and contingent." As is the case for Ashcraft, man's limited capacity to comprehend

nature obscures delineations that are clear to “the Creator” but have “not been imparted” to men.^{xlv} With the knowledge that nature classifies, man can proceed to arrange the material world into various “sorts” of things. Though he cannot with assurance say that his divisions and classifications reflect the “real essence” of a thing or group of things, his constant and steady efforts to denominate existence will likely yield results in a world that has been, so to speak, ordered in advance. Mackie’s more secular interpretation yields a similar conclusion: Lockean “real essences” are a reiteration, albeit an unintentional one, of the old Aristotelian notion. The “intrinsic generality of things” persists as a reality from which Locke cannot escape: his admission that “real essences do not coincide with nominal essences” signals recognition that nature classifies.^{xlvi} Mackie argues that Locke’s account of real and nominal essences represents “an essentialist theory of classification” that amounts to “a botched attempt” to reconcile the use of general words with the fact that “all things that exist are only particulars.”^{xlvii}

This manner of reading of Locke flounders on two accounts. First, Ashcraft and Lovejoy convert Locke’s observation that substances are often “supposed” into an endorsement of the existence of substances per se. On Ashcraft’s interpretation of Locke,

...[W]e must suppose that substance is a peculiar and indispensable ingredient of every particular sensible object with which we do come into contact. That is, the supposition of substance is grounded in the assumed universal order, as a necessary condition for the operation of our rational faculties in their exploration of the visible parts of that order.^{xlviii}

Ashcraft’s emphasis on the inevitability, for Locke, that men will make “suppositions” about substance is certainly correct. As Locke observes, if the mind did not make “suppositions” about a measure of clustering among natural phenomena or the way in which “its *Ideas*” relate to the “*real Constitution, and Essence of any thing,*” “its Progress would be very slow, and its Work endless....”^{xlix} However, contra Ashcraft and in accord with the previous discussion of “what a

Man is,” Locke does not ascribe to the view that these “suppositions” have anything to do with the nature of things. Though men suppose the “*real Essences* of Substances” to be the “foundation and cause” of “species,” the reverse is true: Man-made sortal categories confer “*Essences and Properties*” onto individual things and beings, as evidenced by the fact that “there is no individual particle of Matter [belonging to the individual thing or being], to which any of these Qualities are so annexed, as to be *essential* to it, or inseparable from it. That which is *essential*, belongs to it as a Condition, whereby it is of this or that Sort....”^l To reiterate, “we sort and name Substances by their nominal...*Essences*,” which are “made by the Mind.”^{li} “[T]he mistake and falsehood” lies not in harboring a particular conception of “species,” but in “*judg[ing] it to agree to a Species of Creatures really existing....*”^{lii}

Secondly, Locke’s methodical skepticism about “real essence” and real “species” defuses the criticism that he haphazardly introduces Aristotelian-Scholastic assumptions about nature into his empiricism. As will be argued below, much of this criticism arises from a misunderstanding of his “abstraction” doctrine, often deemed a mechanism for smuggling Aristotelian notions of “kind” and “class” into modern empiricism. However, against Ashcraft, Lovejoy, and Mackie, Lockean “real resemblances” may exist in nature, yet any attempt to conceptually and nominally delineate a particular species can only result in a categorization based on “*obvious appearances*” and is not derived from the existence of essential categories. The boundaries of the species “man” are drawn by human convention, and “nominal essence (i.e. arbitrary definition)” conditions our understanding of who or what counts as a member of that species.^{liii}

Locke’s epistemology, then, admits of an “anthropological relativism” concerning definitions of the human “species,” a fact astonishing primarily in light of the specificity and

liberality with which he defines “man” in the *Second Treatise*.^{liv} To an extent underappreciated by many Locke scholars, particularly those of the Cambridge persuasion, I think the *Essay* itself contains the resources necessary to grapple with this tension. Its thoughts on politics are scattered but sufficient to establish a relationship between the two works.^{lv} In response to the naturally “dynamic”^{lvi} character of “species” concepts and, as will be argued momentarily, moral concepts—including human equality, Locke proposes to “fix” definitions for both in order to facilitate “Commerce and Communication,” as well as other matters relevant to “civil” society.^{lvii} In the *Second Treatise*, Christianity supplies what Lockean philosophy cannot—a “steady” conception of “man” and his duties to others and society, a conception that is politically appropriate for a particular historical moment. However, Locke does not, against the tenets of his epistemology, take “politically appropriate” to mean epistemologically or morally superior, as an analysis of the status of “God” within the *Essay* will demonstrate.

Something has already been said of the need to “fix” species definitions in light of their naturally dynamic character, at least for matters pertaining to “civil” discourse. On Locke’s view, politics requires a non-arbitrary definition—a “fixing”—of the human “species,” though such a definition will be conceived relative to one’s (or a society’s collective) experience with the world.

Substances [such as “man” and “species”], when concerned in moral Discourses^{lviii} their divers Natures are not so much enquir’d into, as supposed; v.g. when we say that *Man is subject to Law*: We mean nothing by *Man*, but a corporeal rational Creature: What the real Essence or other Qualities of that Creature are in this Case, is no way considered. And therefore, whether a Child or Changeling be a *Man* in a physical Sense, may amongst the Naturalists be disputed as it will, it concerns not at all the *moral Man*, as I may call him, which is this immoveable unchangeable *Idea, a corporeal rational Being*.^{lix}

Locke’s account is both descriptive and prescriptive: humans typically do make assumptions about the “species” and, in the general run of things, ought to do so. Having acknowledged what

he perceives to be the *fact* of dynamism concerning conceptions of “man” or “species,” Locke does not embrace this *fact* as especially useful for the legislator or politician tasked with the organization and maintenance of society. We thus “suppos[e]” a “Nature” of the “substance” “man” without interrogating the nature of “substance,” an activity reserved for the pages of the *Essay* and one of limited political value.^{lx}

The Status of “Human Equality” in the *Essay*

Most ideas related to “Divinity, Ethicks, Law, and Politicks” fall under Locke’s category of “mixed modes,” or “fleeting, and transient [Combinations] of simple Ideas” that “[do] not always exist together in Nature.”^{lxi} In terms of Lockean epistemology, I argue that “human equality” should be classified alongside “justice,” “gratitude,” and “obligation” as a “mixed mode.” Consistent with his anti-essentialism concerning the human “species,” Locke expects and in fact observes a great deal of variety among men’s religious, ethical, legal, and political habits and beliefs. As with “species” concepts, “mixed modes” come into being *historically*:

And there is nothing more evident, than that for the most part, in the framing these *Ideas* [mixed modes], the Mind searches not its Patterns in Nature, nor refers the *Ideas* it makes to the real existence of Things; but puts such together, as may best serve its own Purposes, without tying it self to a precise imitation of any that that really exists.^{lxii}

However, while the content of the mixed mode might be “arbitrary,” the ideas are not constructed “at random,” but for an immediate practical purpose—“the convenience of Communication, which is the chief end of Language.”^{lxiii} Because “mixed modes” come into being historically, deriving their “Unity from an Act of the Mind” rather than from Nature, they lack a “steady existence” and would recede into history were there no “Name” to “give them their lasting duration.”^{lxiv}

If “human equality” is a “mixed mode,” it cannot be, as Locke says in the *Second Treatise*, a natural human condition. Like other “mixed modes” and “species” concepts, it attains an “essence” only after it is clearly defined, and Locke is most concerned with fixing the “Standard” according to which moral and political determinations are rendered.^{lxv} “*Definition is the only way, whereby the precise Meaning of moral Words can be known...*[Discourses in Morality] having no external Beings for *Archetypes* which they are referr’d to, and must correspond with.”^{lxvi} Peering behind the names of our mixed modes, Locke finds only “several scattered independent *Ideas*,” a state of affairs too fragile to leave without a proper, well-defined remedy.^{lxvii}

Once the content of our “mixed modes” is specified, “moral Knowledge may be brought, to so great Clearness and Certainty.”^{lxviii} Clarity concerning “moral Knowledge” rises from the instability of mixed modes because “*Morally Good and Evil...is only the Conformity or Disagreement of our voluntary Actions to some Law.*” Ironically, their lacking material existence makes mixed modes *more* susceptible to precise determination than substances such as “man” and “species.” Having no material referent in Nature, “Men may...exactly know the Ideas, that go to each Composition, and so both use these Words in a certain and undoubted Signification, and perfectly declare, when there is Occasion, what they stand for.”^{lxix}

Given his skepticism concerning “man” and “morality,” Locke willingly permits a Christian conception of “man” to inform and shape political life. However, many have argued, as will Jeremy Waldron momentarily, that the *Essay* erects Christianity as *the final* standard for politics and morality, Locke’s skepticism aside. This argument assumes many forms, but its simplest form may be stated as follows: There exists at the core of Locke’s political philosophy a fundamental conflict between reason (his skeptical epistemology) and religion (his invocation of

God in the *Essay*, but especially in the *Second Treatise*). This view uncritically accepts the situation of “God” within the context of the epistemology and has been most severely criticized by Bluhm, Teger, and Wintfeld.^{lxx}

The Status of “God” in the *Essay*

Book IV, Chapter X of the *Essay* sets out to “shew...that we are capable of *knowing*, i.e. *being certain that there is a GOD...*”^{lxxi} Most commentators denounce Locke’s rational “demonstration” of God’s existence as especially weak and “elementary,” though few explore as rigorously as Wintfeld, Teger, and Bluhm its rather odd situation within an empirical epistemology.^{lxxii} Generally speaking, the proof amounts to a vacillation on Locke’s part between the “inconceivability” of creation *ex nihilo* and its necessary “supposition,” a “circularity” necessitated by the logical impossibility of all such demonstrations.^{lxxiii} Locke’s claim that his “demonstration” produces “knowledge” of God’s existence, contend Wintfeld et. al, clearly contradicts two basic tenets of his own epistemology.^{lxxiv} Most importantly, they hold that Locke is conscious of his failure but constructs a “proof” for reasons identical to those that motivate his willingness to accept the public “supposition” of “species” concepts where there are no “species” concepts to be had in nature: man needs the idea of God, just as he needs the idea of a species or of a coherent, intelligible moral code.

First, they argue, under Locke’s classification scheme, God represents a “complex idea” of substance, a category, like “man,” that is wholly man-made.^{lxxv} Since our ideas of substance (man, species, etc.) are purely human constructs, so, too, is our idea of God. As with our ideas about material reality, we suppose our ideas about God “cannot subsist” independent of “something to support them,” even if that “something” is “unknown.”^{lxxvi} With the idea of “man,” we suppose a “substratum” that underpins a natural kind; with the idea of God, we

suppose a Being that underpins all things. We form “the *Idea* we have of the incomprehensible supreme Being,” argues Locke, by writing large all positive aspects of our existence, which derive from reflection on sensory experience.^{lxxvii} “[W]e enlarge every one of these [ideas of what we consider ‘it...better to have, than to be without’ (e.g. knowledge, power, pleasure, and happiness)] with our *Idea* of Infinity; and...make our complex *Idea of God*.”^{lxxviii}

Secondly, Locke argues that verbal demonstrations cannot prove anything about the existence of substances.^{lxxix} Our propositions about God, like our propositions about man, are purely definitional. Of them, we can have only a “*verbal Certainty*” associated with the “nominal essence” we have assigned to a particular “substance.”^{lxxx} Locke repeatedly cautions the reader not to be “misled” by philosophers’ verbal demonstrations, which, when applied to “substance” and “existence,” are but “trifling propositions” that contribute “not one jot in the Knowledge of the Truth of Things.”^{lxxxi}

...a man may find an infinite number of Propositions, Reasonings, and Conclusions in Books of Metaphysics, a School-Divinity, and some sort of natural Philosophy; and after all, know as little of GOD, Spirits, or Bodies, as he did before he set out.^{lxxxii}

In addition to the points raised by Wintfeld et al., one should note Locke’s oft-expressed view that God is an exception to the official tenets of his epistemology:

...the having the *Ideas* of Spirits does not make us know, that any such Things do exist without us, or *that there are any finite Spirits*, or any other spiritual Beings, but the Eternal GOD.^{lxxxiii}

For there being no necessary connexion of *real Existence*, with any *Idea* a Man hath in his memory, nor of any other Existence but that of GOD, with the Existence of any particular Man...For the having the *Idea* of any thing in our Mind, no more proves the Existence of that Thing, than the picture of a Man evidences his being in the World, or the Visions of a Dream make thereby a true History.^{lxxxiv}

Again, the epistemology supports our having the “notion” of God yet precludes knowledge of His existence. To the Cambridge historians, such instances represent another proverbial instance of Lockean equivocation. However, it is more likely a thinly veiled attempt to moderate the implications of his epistemology by obscuring them. Following Zuckert’s argument about the transparency of Locke’s skepticism, I would argue that the anomalous character of Locke’s tendency to except knowledge of God’s existence from the implications of his epistemology undermines his ability to appropriate God for political purposes.^{lxxxv}

A Collective Pronouncement: The Status of “Man,” “Equality,” and “God” in the *Essay*

Separate analyses of “man,” “equality,” and “God”—two substances and a mixed mode—within the context of Locke’s epistemology converge on different aspects of a recurring theme: for Locke, because we cannot “know,” we must “suppose” or, in the case of religion, “believe.” That he does not embrace the “dynamic” nature of existence and offers a positive account of “man” and his duties in the *Second Treatise* generates charges of inconsistency directed at the very core of his philosophical position. A careful reading of the *Essay*, however, provides useful insight about why the *Second Treatise* might issue such a strong statement about the nature of “man.” Given the fluidity of actual human existence, men can enjoy basic physical security and social peace only after certain assumptions about the nature of common life have been settled and are more-or-less taken for granted. Casual reflection on Locke’s historical context—one rife with religious and social conflict—reveals a material source of motivation for this worry.

Two prominent scholars, Jeremy Waldron and Michael Zuckert, conclude separately and for radically different reasons that Locke’s skepticism about “man” and “species” does not

endanger his assertion of human equality as “natural.” Each scholar’s analysis is, I argue, partially correct.

Jeremy Waldron claims that despite Locke’s skepticism about species, his understanding of human *equality* rises from a marked difference between man and beast—the power of abstraction, or the ability to formulate and employ general ideas.^{lxxxvi} Through the power of abstraction, men can reason to or otherwise relate to the existence of God and understand themselves as persons having “a special *moral* relation to [Him].”^{lxxxvii} According to Waldron, the problem of human equality that arises from a reductive epistemology is solved, for Locke, by reference to the Divine. God participates in an otherwise skeptical epistemology, and Locke’s reference to the Divine is genuine, rather than the product of a need to hold together a collection of distinct and disparate phenomena.

Michael Zuckert modifies Leo Strauss’s thesis regarding religion and Lockean political philosophy. Both contend that Locke employs religious argumentation in order to mask an atheistic, hedonistic philosophical position. Yet whereas the latter presents Locke’s motive as sinister (introducing an unsuspecting society to the tenets of Hobbesianism), the former finds the *Second Treatise* to be a powerful instance of philosophical self-restraint. Locke recognizes the failure of reason to afford specific moral guidance for political societies; in this way, it is “reasonable” to permit a certain form of Christianity, which does supply such information, to persist alongside an otherwise rational philosophical position.^{lxxxviii} According to Zuckert, however, the death of God (for Lockean philosophy if not for Lockean politics) does not imply the death of equality as a “natural” human condition. Zuckert argues that Locke’s claim about “self-ownership” establishes human equality apart from the existence of a Creator God, or on a purely secular foundation.

Presentation and analysis of these alternative arguments will demonstrate their weakness as justifications for the naturalness of human equality in Locke's thought. On the one hand, Lockean philosophy understands God as a "Fiction or Contrivance" of the human mind, thus He cannot serve, contra Waldron, as a genuine foundation for equality. However, Locke's skepticism concerning "man" and "species" undermines Zuckert's argument that "self-ownership" can serve as the foundation for human equality. Like other attempts to denominate the species, the idea that humans are "self-owners" might reveal some interesting information about the differences between many of those considered "human" and all beasts, yet it cannot establish equality among beings. Waldron is correct that such requires the generosity of an external authority, at least for John Locke.

Waldron's Solution to the Problem of Equality in Locke

In *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke's Political Thought*, Waldron acknowledges Locke's "pretty through-going anti-realism" concerning the "natural kind" notion of species and the potential problem this poses for the *Second Treatise's* presentation of human equality.^{lxxxix} As suggested above, Lockean empiricism undermines this conception of equality because anything essential about "man" or the "species" is lost when one attends to the singular material composition of every "human" being. To respond to this difficulty, Waldron argues, Locke situates God within the broader context of his epistemology. In the final analysis, Locke's commitment to a theologically motivated conception of what it means to be a human being directs and tempers the conclusions he draws from an otherwise rational, skeptical epistemology. Waldron concludes that Locke's method is hardly as confused and ad hoc as the Cambridge historians have contended, although it does rely on the insertion of God at a key moment in order to confer on humans an elevated moral status.^{xc}

“In order to make Locke’s account of equality in the *Two Treatises* consistent with his discussion in Book III of the *Essay*,” Waldron argues, a “species” or “natural kind” concept cannot supply the foundation for equality.^{xci} He proceeds on the basis that Locke *must* supply an epistemological justification for the “equality of Men by Nature,” thus such *must* be found in the pages of the *Essay*.^{xcii} Having admitted Locke’s unequivocal denial of a human “species,” Waldron proposes to “focus instead on what Locke is prepared to concede—namely, real resemblances between particulars.”^{xciii}

For a “real resemblance” among beings to do the heavy lifting required of Locke’s equality principle, Waldron argues, “it must be an interesting or relevant similarity for the purposes of the weight that is going to be placed on it.”^{xciv} Equality cannot be established by reference to a trivial feature that all “men” share, such as their constitution by molecular particles. Locke must meet the challenge of locating a resemblance that is both common to all men *and* unique to mankind.^{xcv} Furthermore, he must demonstrate that this single point or cluster of resemblances, this “threshold” that one must meet to earn the designation “human,” operates by classifying individuals in a “non-scalar,” rather than a hierarchical, manner. That some one attains the minimum criteria for “humanness” should matter much more than further distinctions within the category “human.”^{xcvi} This is Locke’s project, according to Waldron.

As Locke’s use of marginal examples (e.g. changelings) indicates, there exist virtually no resemblances shared by all members of what has traditionally been considered the human species. A common resemblance among men is difficult enough to locate, yet any resemblance that grounds human equality must also elevate and distinguish man from beasts and other natural things. However, to revisit a previous argument, nature supplies only a continuum of beings and things: “a *Foetus in the Mother’s Womb, differs not much from the State of a Vegetable;*” the

great chain of being “ascend[s] upward” and downward from man by “gentle degrees,” and the differences between, for instance, vegetables and fetuses, are “almost insensible.”^{xcvii} Locke’s account of the chain of being permits the simultaneity of what are, for the proponent of human equality, two inimical understandings of human ontology: the equation of man and beast and the radical opposition of man and man.

According to Waldron, it is at this moment that Locke resorts to religious argumentation. To buttress the presentation of “man” proffered in the *Second Treatise*, theology must participate in an otherwise skeptical epistemology. Building on Locke’s discussion of a feature that most humans have in common and that all “brutes” lack—the power to abstract, or “reason on the basis of general ideas”—Waldron argues that this “real resemblance,” when paired with Locke’s attempt to demonstrate God’s existence, assigns humans a “special status” as a “class” of creatures set apart by nature as capable of experiencing a “special *moral* relation[ship]” with God.^{xcviii}

Anyone with the capacity for abstraction can reason to the existence of God, and he can relate the idea of God to there being a law that applies to him both in his conduct in this world and as to his prospects in the next. The content of that law may not be available to everyone’s reason, but anyone above the threshold has the power to relate the idea of such law to what is known by faith and revelation about God’s commandments....^{xcix}

As men have “[l]ight enough to lead them to the Knowledge of their Maker, and the sight of their own Duties,” they enjoy a special moral status as a result of this “corporeal rationality.”^c While all humans, especially those possessing dim cognitive capacities, may not understand Locke’s rational demonstration of God’s existence, most have “*intellect enough*” to consider themselves as persons and follow the light of revelation to knowledge of their status as subject to an omnipotent Deity.^{ci} If one can abstract, or “reason on the basis of general ideas”—of which God is one—he merits inclusion as part of the “species” on display in the *Second Treatise*.^{cii} Again,

Waldron's idea is that humans who possess "corporeal rationality" and can abstract functions, in most circumstances, to distinguish man from beast yet ensures that extreme dissimilarities among men are of minimal import.

On Waldron's interpretation of Locke, ordinary men can, through reason or revelation, find their way to the existence of God. The idea of a Creator God brings into existence a class of beings that is both more internally homogenous (when compared to the majesty of the Creator) and more special than is evident from an empirical point of view. For reasons adumbrated above, "corporeal rationality" (human reason) alone cannot create a "class" of human beings—the distribution of human intelligence is simply too uneven. However, the potential for human beings to utilize their "corporeal rationality" in a particular way—in contemplation of God's existence whether through reason or revelation—separates them from the rest of natural things. Waldron describes the egalitarian attitude that flows from this conceptualization of the "human":

Despite vast differences in the intellectual abilities of humans,

...the fact that one is dealing with an animal that has the capacity to approach the task [of considering himself in relation to God] in one way or another is all-important, and it makes a huge difference to how such a being may be treated in comparison to animals whose capacities are such that this whole business of knowing God and figuring out his commandments is simply out of the question... When I catch a rabbit, I know that I am *not* dealing with a creature that has the capacity to abstract, and so I know that there is no question of this being one of God's special servants, sent into the world about his business. But if I catch a human in full possession of his faculties, I know I should be careful how I deal with him.^{ciii}

It is critical to notice that the addition of God does not eliminate all of the problems associated with drawing a boundary around the human species; marginal cases will continue to arise. However, it does ensure that we are very, very careful in demarcating the species.

Waldron's chastisement of the Cambridge School for its tendency to underestimate Locke's theoretical sophistication and coherence deserves much praise. Ironically, however, the

scholarly care he takes in relating the *Essay* and the *Second Treatise* lends credibility to a thesis articulated much less convincingly by the Cambridge historians—namely, that at the heart of Locke’s philosophy lies a “rationalist argument imbued with religious content.”^{civ} His acknowledgement of Locke’s “toying with various Socinian and unitarian possibilities” implicitly denies Ashcraft’s facile characterization of the philosopher’s “unshakeable Christian faith” and concomitant resolution of all difficult philosophical questions into the theological.^{cv} Nevertheless, his argument commences with a problematic theoretical leap—the emphasis on a “real resemblance” as a starting point for thinking about equality. As Waldron himself acknowledges, Locke’s epistemology does not allow “real resemblances” to function as proxies for species concepts. Furthermore, after “imbuing” abstraction “with religious content,” Waldron proceeds to integrate Locke’s religious assumptions into his epistemological framework. With one fell swoop, this move appears to eliminate much of the tension between the religious argumentation and the empiricism. Yet upon closer inspection, Waldron’s claim that abstraction can lead men to genuine knowledge of God’s existence does not hold. Abstract ideas, Locke argues, are but “Fictions and Contrivances of the Mind,” regardless of one’s belief about their content.^{cvi}

Critique of Waldron

Waldron’s “Real Resemblances”: “Making” Locke Consistent

If the aforementioned argument about status of “real resemblances” in Locke’s epistemology is correct, Waldron’s move to consider “real resemblances” rather than “species” concepts as a basis for equality cannot be justified. His initial analysis of “real resemblances” in the natural world parallels his pronouncement on the status of “species” in the *Essay*. Before determining that, in lieu of a species concept, certain “real resemblances between particulars” are

“doing the crucial work in Locke’s account of equality,” Waldron admits that categorizations of such similarities are based on “nothing in nature,” but rather derive from the human “propensity” to use “general words.” Distinctions rooted in “resemblances and differences,” like species concepts, amount to little more than “nominal essences,” or “projections onto [the] nature of our own linguistic habits.”^{cvi} Constant refinement of these nominal classifications might facilitate social interaction, prevent misunderstandings, etc., but “improvement in our nominal classifications is entirely relative to our purposes in making such classifications....”^{cvi} How *well* human beings collect, divide, or relate the phenomena of existence is not a question to which there is an “objective[ly]” correct response. Provided the honing of species or other categories is simply “pragmatic,” having no correspondence with divisions that inhere in nature, our evaluative judgments concerning better and worse orderings of the natural world are also simply “pragmatic.”^{cix} This analysis disallows his subsequent reversion to “real resemblances” as potentially informative about the nature of human equality.

Waldron’s preferred “real resemblance”—the power of abstraction—suffers from many of the difficulties inherent in the other alternatives proposed and rejected by Locke (and Waldron) for locating “the precise and *unmovable Boundaries of that Species.*” Some humans lack the power to abstract, and humans exhibit varying capacities for “reason[ing] on the basis of general ideas.”^{cx} Waldron recognizes that without reference to Locke’s religious argumentation, these two observations precipitate the failure of abstraction to distinguish all men from beasts and to establish equality among humans.

Waldron justifies this unexpected move to consider “characteristics” and “resemblances” rather than “species or ranks of species” by pointing to a passage in Locke analyzed earlier in

this paper. Locke, he claims, makes a “philosophical” distinction “between species and real resemblance.”^{cxix} Once again, here is the passage:

Substances, when concerned in moral Discourses, their divers Natures are not so much enquir’d into, as supposed; v.g. when we say that *Man is subject to Law*: We mean nothing by *Man*, but a corporeal rational Creature: What the real Essence or other Qualities of that Creature are in this Case, is no way considered. And therefore, whether a Child or Changeling be a *Man* in a physical Sense, may amongst the Naturalists be disputed as it will, it concerns not at all the *moral Man*, as I may call him, which is this immoveable unchangeable *Idea, a corporeal rational Being*.^{cxii}

Rather than routinely contemplating the nature of species and other nuances of speculative philosophy, human societies apply the aforementioned notion of “corporeal rationality,” which belongs to “*moral Man*,” an identity—“Nature...supposed”—constructed by humans to suit the purposes of administering justice and sound government.^{cxiii} While it is certainly true that Locke recommends assuming a human essence into order to circumvent “Obscurity” in “moral Discourses,” Waldron mistakenly claims that he endorses “corporeal rationality” as *the most* legitimate way to constitute that essence.^{cxiv}

On Waldron’s interpretation of this passage, Locke’s epistemology, at bottom, sanctions the supposition of a particular, Christian understanding of what it means to be a person, or a “*moral Man*.” Embedded in the notion of “corporeal rationality” belonging to “*moral Man*,” he argues, is a certain, religiously inspired understanding of the human intellect.

To motivate and explicate the power of abstraction as the relevant equality-threshold, we must consider the moral and theological pragmatics which lie at the back of Locke’s account of the human intellect...each [standard model human] has *intellect enough* for some fundamental purpose [i.e. “to lead them to the Knowledge of their Maker”].^{cxv}

According to Waldron, this understanding of “*moral Man*” directs Locke to ask in the case of human equality: if we know in advance that people are equal, what are the “relevant [empirical] resemblances” that comport with this ideal and will help us actualize equality in the political

realm?^{cxvi} In other words, Locke reasons backwards from his religious assumptions while philosophizing, rather than determining that religion might be a good thing for society as a result of his philosophical conclusions, as I have been arguing.

Contra Waldron, Locke's call to "suppose" that man has a "nature" and avoid analyses of "Substances" "when concerned with moral Discourses" rests on pragmatic, rather than "philosophical" grounds. Such a move can be considered "philosophical" only if it refers to (Lockean) philosophy's recognition of its own inability to supply politics with moral guidance. This account of how humans confront moral concerns in no way alters Locke's earlier claim about the failure of real resemblances to yield a species (or species-like) group of human beings. Locke "finesse[s] the whole problem of biological taxonomy" because men's common life in society necessitates a stable conception of human identity.^{cxvii} By contending that Locke's epistemology assumes "moral Man" to imply a democratic, Christian understanding of the human intellect, Waldron forgets that the epistemology sanctions as legitimate numerous understandings of "man" and "species." What Locke does in the *Second Treatise* by advancing a particular conception of "moral Man" in no way negates the fact that other conceptions are equally defensible.

The Epistemology of Abstraction: Man-Made God

Waldron follows other commentators in highlighting the weakness of Locke's "demonstration" of God's existence, a fact he readily admits was not lost on the philosopher. Nevertheless, without entertaining the specific problems associated with the proof, Waldron proceeds upon the basis that "Locke believed the argument for God's existence was...something which required no particularly abstruse reasoning and might be arrived at by the intellect of the meanest person."^{cxviii} Furthermore, "If showing [that God exists] had required an irrational *leap*

of faith, then morality would not in principle be capable of demonstration,” the result being, as Locke argues in the early *Essays on the Laws of Nature*, that men could be bound by nothing but the will of the strongest.^{cxix} Now we have already seen how the average individual could reasonably arrive at the “idea of God” in the way that he could arrive at say, the idea of other “Spirits”—by “abstracting” from ordinary experience. However, for purposes of attaining “knowledge” in a Lockean sense, converging on the “idea of God” is rather different from actually demonstrating God’s existence.

Given its conceptual status within Locke’s epistemology, the faculty of abstraction undermines Waldron’s claim that it saves equality for Locke by enabling humans to find their way to God’s existence. In his most extensive exploration of the subject, Locke explains the faculty of abstraction as related to man’s need to impose order on a world of particulars.

[I]f every particular *Idea* that we take in, should have a distinct Name, Names must be endless. To prevent this, the Mind makes the particular *Ideas*, received from particular Objects, to become general; which is done by considering them as they are in the Mind such Appearances, separate from all other Existences, and the circumstances of real Existence, as Time, Place, or any other concomitant *Ideas*. This is called *ABSTRACTION*, whereby *Ideas* taken from particular Beings, become general Representatives of all of the same kind; and their Names general Names, applicable to whatever exists conformable to such abstract *Ideas*.^{cxx}

Put another way, abstraction is the process whereby the mind “bind[s] [things] into Bundles, and ranks them so into sorts”; in short, the term “abstraction,” in Locke’s usage, signals the conventional process of “collect[ing] Things under comprehensive *Ideas*, with Names annexed to them into *Genera* and *Species*.”^{cxxi} As Waldron’s discussion of species indicates, he is keenly aware that the process of forming general ideas results only in conventional categories, or “genera” and “species.” Abstraction is merely the name Locke confers on this process of sorting things by their “*obvious appearances*” and “sensible Qualities,” and the general ideas this mental

operation produces are but “Fictions and Contrivances of the Mind.”^{cxxii} If God is an abstraction from ordinary existence, then He is a “Fiction” or a “Contrivance” of the human mind. Arguments about equality (or anything else) derived from contemplation of an abstract idea like God must also be fictive or contrived.

Waldron’s argument from abstraction merely confirms the conclusion reached earlier about the man-made quality of ideas about God. As epistemological phenomena, abstract ideas of substance and their linguistic correlates—general words—convey “no Knowledge of real Existence at all,” but only knowledge of nominal essence, or conventional denomination of the world according to “obvious appearances.”^{cxxiii} Man wrongly supposes that his ideas doubly conform, or agree with, “the Things existing without them to which they are referr’d; and are the same also, to which the names they give them....”^{cxxiv} In reasoning thus, man expands the practical, salutary character of abstraction to include a kind of natural correspondence among particular objects, abstract general ideas, and language that forgets the synthetic character of abstract ideas. Abstract ideas can be “true” not because they are “Eternal Propositions actually formed, and antecedent to the Understanding” or “imprinted on the Mind” by an external force, but rather, because they prove useful within an intellectual framework which man has deemed authoritative.^{cxxv} That our abstract ideas of substances such as God should be “looked upon as the Representations of the unknown Essences of Things” is a “chimerical Supposition.”^{cxxvi}

Now it is certainly true that abstraction, or, in Waldron’s terms, “the capacity to reason on the basis of general ideas,” distinguishes most men from all beasts in a way that brute, low-level reasoning or animal prudence does not. Unlike beasts, men can live otherwise than by appetite, impulse, and force, establishing moral relations with one another, or relations governed by rule-following and reinforced with rewards and punishments.^{cxxvii} As we have seen, the

formation of abstract ideas such as God can facilitate the business of political and social life.

Nevertheless, in the final analysis, abstraction demonstrates only that we are on the whole better equipped than beasts to negotiate our temporal situation, not, as Waldron claims, that we are all equal.

Waldron Wrap-up

Waldron errs in concluding that Locke thought a) the existence of God was “knowable” through abstraction and b) his particular (i.e. “Christian”) definition of “moral Man” was epistemologically superior to other possible definitions of “moral Man.” However, his labors draw attention to the careful situation of “God” within Locke’s thought. I have been arguing against Waldron that Locke’s understanding of God fails to solve the philosophical-epistemological problem of “man” and “species” suggested by the *Essay*, placing human equality squarely into the category of “mixed modes,” or complex ideas with no relation to the nature of things. However, whether God and equality are “suppositions” or objects of demonstration, their relationship in Locke’s thought is functionally similar, and no one articulates the nature of this relationship better than Waldron.

Human equality, for Locke, requires the idea of a Creator God. Resounding testimony to this tight bond is Locke’s infamous “refusal of toleration to atheists” in *A Letter Concerning Toleration*. The *Letter* echoes his insistence in the early *Essays on the Law of Nature* that without the guidance of the natural law promulgated by “the will of a supreme Godhead,” mankind loses the capacity for politics, “order, and fellowship”^{cxxviii}:

Those are not at all to be tolerated who deny the Being of a God. Promises, Covenants, and Oaths, *which are the Bonds of Humane Society*, can have not hold upon an Atheist. The taking away of God, tho but even in thought, dissolves all [emphasis mine].^{cxxix}

The literature rightly insists that the potential for lawlessness and social discord posed by the presence of the atheist, over whom divine rewards and punishments have little hold, concerns Locke. Yet as Waldron suggests, Locke is not only concerned with the atheist's "acting-out," but also, and perhaps more so, with the long-term implications of his persistent skepticism, which undermines the political calmly and subtly, albeit just as surely as flagrant displays of lawlessness. For instance, because he has no reason to conclude that others deserve respect and consideration "as such" (i.e. as creatures who, like himself, are made in the image of God), the atheist threatens to weaken the foundations of the Lockean political order. In other words, one might reasonably presume the dissolution of "all" to include the proposition of human equality.^{cxxx}

Waldron's exegesis of Locke's account of species presents in sharp relief the dilemma modern liberals face when attempting to formulate, in the manner of John Rawls, a robust alternative equality principle that is "defensible from a variety of philosophical perspectives, some religious and some not."^{cxxxi} Having experienced equality yet eager to wrest it from its initial theological foundation, many modern thinkers, Waldron cautions, undertake a project whose difficulty they should not underestimate. To dispense with the "God stuff" is to destabilize the organizing concept Locke employs to "give shape" to the "shapelessness" of an otherwise unintelligible and incoherent mass of individual beings. Without the existence of a Creator God, for Locke, one cannot argue that there are certain "facts about humanity" which merit special consideration as features toward "which we might take up egalitarian attitudes (for any reason)." "A certain set of characteristics" associated with human equality "might seem arbitrary, shapeless, even insignificant apart from [Locke's] religious context."^{cxxxii} The ubiquity of doubt in the present age motivates the search for a secular foundation for equality. However,

while certain elements of the philosophical and political community might “cheer” the removal of God from the equality equation, they should concede that doing so leaves in suspension a collection of particular beings held together by the mere assertion of an “overlapping consensus.”^{cxxxiii}

Zuckert’s Solution to the Problem of Equality in Locke (in progress)

In *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism* and *Launching Liberalism*, Michael Zuckert denies the essential relatedness of God and equality in Locke’s thought. In accord with the critique of Waldron supplied above, he contends that for purposes of Lockean philosophy, if not Lockean politics, God is dead, and along with Him, a non-Hobbesian law of nature that guides human action. Religious rhetoric functions prominently in the Lockean enterprise, but the political philosophy itself derives from a radically skeptical epistemology that in no way relies on theological assumptions. Zuckert effectively closes the escape hatch utilized by Waldron for reconciling the *Essay*’s skeptical epistemology with the *Second Treatise*’s account of human equality. Yet on Zuckert’s interpretation, Locke does not despair of situating equality in a world of “human...not divine making.”^{cxxxiv} According to Zuckert, the problem of species definition coupled with the non-existence of God prompts Locke to found equality in the sanctity of individual selves, or on the fact that men are “self-owners.”^{cxxxv} While some might be persuaded by the *Second Treatise*’s religious foundation for natural equality and natural rights, Locke, Zuckert contends, also advances the “self-ownership argument as one with similar moral and political consequences, yet one about which he had fewer hesitations....”^{cxxxvi} Human “self-ownership” functions in important ways in Locke’s political thought, perhaps supplying, like the “divine ownership” argument, a plausible *political* foundation for human equality. However, the

naturalistic argument from “self-ownership” does not function as a philosophical justification for equality.

The Failure of “Hobbesian” Equality: Zuckert’s Critique of Strauss

Zuckert’s argument for Lockean equality predicated on “self-ownership” must be understood with reference to the primary alternative position he emphatically rejects: While Zuckert takes Leo Strauss’s thesis, detailed below, as the “indispensable point of departure for understanding [Locke],” he rejects Strauss’s “identification of Locke as, in fundamental ways, a Hobbesian,” including Strauss’s implicit assumption that Lockean equality resembles Hobbesian equality.^{cxvii} For Zuckert, Lockean equality cannot be Hobbesian, for Hobbes does not sufficiently distinguish between man and beast.

The theme of Strauss’s discussion of Locke in *Natural Right and History* is the virtual equation of his political philosophy with that of Hobbes: “Locke deviated considerably from the traditional [Thomistic] natural law teaching and followed the lead given by Hobbes.”^{cxviii} In brief, this identification of Locke with Hobbes assigns the former, by association, a minimalist conception of human equality grounded in a raw, mutually felt desire for self-preservation. When Strauss discards the theoretical importance of Locke’s religious rhetoric, what remains to do the heavy theoretical lifting is the “fundamental law of nature,” roughly the equivalent of Hobbes’ “right of nature,” whereby every man must preserve himself “as much as possible.”^{cxix}

Equality among men is for Hobbes both a material and circumstantial reality. First, the physical and mental “difference[s] between man and man” are not “so considerable” as to frustrate permanently the capacity of one relative to the capacity of another.

For as to the strength of the body, the weakest has strength enough to kill the strongest, either by secret machination, or by confederacy with others that are in the same danger with himself. As to the faculties of the mind...I find yet a greater equality amongst men

than of strength. For prudence is but experience, which equal time equally bestows on all men in those things they equally apply themselves unto.^{cxl}

Secondly, seemingly gross disparities and dissimilarities among beings are overcome by the collective recognition of the precariousness of the human predicament: “[T]he invader again is in the like danger of another.”^{cxli} With Hobbes’s complete secularization of political thought, according to Strauss, “fear of violent death” replaces “the fear of God” as the principal consideration for reasonable human beings contemplating the possibilities of political and social action.^{cxlii} Equality, for Hobbes, results not from divine bestowal but from a radical diminution of human ends.

This conception of equality, though far from lofty, appears at first glance both sufficiently coherent and “natural.” Frightfully thin and reflective, perhaps, of little more than “animal prudence,” this standard nonetheless counts, on Strauss’s view, as a legitimate way of understanding human equality. It constitutes the foundation on which modern political philosophers can still assert a notion of “natural right.” One can imagine without difficulty why Strauss, given the theoretical importance of his larger claim about Locke, felt little need to comment on the places in which his non-theistic Locke explicitly addresses the impossibility of knowing “what a *Man* is” and the implications of such skepticism for equality.

In his discussion of species recounted above, Locke analyzes and eventually rejects Hobbesian-like reasoning for the establishment of human equality. Where Hobbes finds a sufficient basis for equality in the fact that men are more equal than not “in faculties of body and mind,” Locke elucidates the failure of an empirical science of matter and beings to produce an epistemologically sound categorization of the human. An empirical survey of humans and their characteristics cannot establish anything “essential” to all human beings, for it is impossible to

locate a single feature or cluster thereof that a) is “necessarily” or “accidentally joined” to a particular man or group of men and b) is both common to all men and unique to mankind. Locke’s conscious denial that the human and non-human can be clearly differentiated signals his rejection, from similar epistemological premises, of Hobbes’s notion of equality. Given Hobbes’s explicit nominalism about the definition of man, it is doubtful that he would quibble with the allegation that his definition of human equality is, at bottom, conventional and provisional.^{cxliii}

Therefore, Zuckert is right to claim that Hobbes’s epistemology does not draw a clear line between man and beast. For Hobbes, Zuckert observes, “[t]he same mechanistic principles of motion that account for the actions of the animals account for human beings as well. The differences between human beings and other beings are mere matters of degree.”^{cxliv} However, Zuckert wrongly suggests that Locke’s account of man differs significantly from the Hobbesian story. Recall the image Locke supplies of the “great chain of being”:

That there should be more *Species* of intelligent Creatures above us, than there are of sensible and material below us, is probably to me from hence; That in all the visible corporal World, we see no Chasms, or Gaps. All quite down from us, the descent is by easy steps, and a continued series of Things, that in each remove, differ very little of from the other. There are Fishes that have Wings, and are not Strangers to the airy Region: and there are some Birds, that are Inhabitants of the Water... There are some Brutes, that seem to have as much Knowledge and Reason, as some that are called Men: and the Animal and Vegetable Kingdoms, are so nearly join’d, that if you will take the lowest of one, and the highest of the other, there will scarce be perceived any great difference between them; and so on till we come to the lowest and the most inorganical parts of Matter, we shall find every-where, that the several *Species* are linked together, and differ but in almost insensible degrees.^{cxlv}

Nevertheless, Zuckert claims to rise above the challenge posed by Locke’s skepticism about species.

In spite of his skepticism about species, Zuckert argues, Locke offers a compelling account of equality that “draws a much stronger line of demarcation [than Hobbes’s] between humans and other beings.”^{cxlvi} Again, Zuckert has excluded the possibility that Locke’s rhetorical appeal to the idea of a Creator God could constitute an actual justification for human equality.

Locke followed Hobbes in denying to humanity the dignity that derived from being the cherished creature of a creating God, but he surpassed Hobbes and all other moderns who preceded him in uncovering the genuine source of the dim awareness that human beings have of their own dignity.^{cxlvii}

Zuckert’s Locke distinguishes humans as a peculiar class of beings by reference to the “self-ownership” argument, which promises both to differentiate men from beasts and other entities and to reveal their situation of relative equality “vis-à-vis” each other. In Zuckert’s estimation, the “self-ownership” argument emerges in Locke’s discussion of property to replace the “failed” (i.e. purely rhetorical) argument from “divine ownership” that pervades the early portions of the *Second Treatise*. Zuckert cites the following passage as the critical moment at which “human making” clearly supercedes “divine making.”

Though the earth, and all inferior creatures, be common to all men, yet every man has a *property* in his own *person*: this no body has any right to but himself. The *labour* of his body, and the *work* of his hands, we may say, are properly his.^{cxlviii}

Coupled with the fact that men have “no [readily discernible] superior on earth,” the “self-ownership” argument builds on Locke’s understanding of labor as central to a world not understood in relation to a “beneficent and provident God or nature.”^{cxlix} “Human beings alone have property,” Zuckert argues, for even though beasts might appropriate the goods of nature, they do not have “*property* in [their] own *person*[s].”^{cl}

For Zuckert, because men are “self-owners” prior to the formation of society or government, “Locke can sensibly speak of the use of ‘force without right’ in the state of nature;

Hobbes can do no such thing.”^{cli} Each person can “raise” not only “claims of [pre-political] right,” but also concomitant “claim[s] of exclusivity” to his person and goods.^{clii} “If there is property [in the self], there can be injustice.” An individual can “expect...that others ought to respect [his] claim and forbear from [his] property.”^{cliii}

This does not necessarily mean I expect that they will so forbear [the state of nature is rather precarious], but if they do not, I will consider their actions unjust. This is an analytic truth, implicit in the very notion of property I am deploying. If I raise this claim, and do not on the basis of some exceptional feature of myself...but on the basis (somehow) of my bare humanness, then the logic of my own claim for myself leads me beyond the claim I raise for myself to recognize like claims of others.^{cliv}

From this “analytic truth,” Zuckert argues, rises Locke’s conceptualization of human beings as “free, responsible, and rational,” in contradistinction to Hobbes, who denies natural property and consequently natural justice.^{clv} The latter contends that the state of nature is a “war of every man against every man,” where there are “no *mine* and *thine* distinct, but only that to be every man’s that he can get, and for so long as he can keep it.”^{clvi}

According to Zuckert, the component of “self-ownership” most important for natural rights and human equality is man’s ability to constitute or define himself through the utilization of his intellectual faculties, particularly the power of abstraction, which “all brutes lack.” Abstraction, or the formation of general ideas, enables man to elevate himself above the vicissitudes of sensory experience “and stand in semisovereign sway over [his mind’s] own contents.”^{clvii}

As we have seen, Locke’s skepticism regarding species derives in large part from his understanding of personal identity—“what a *Man* is”—as fundamentally unstable. Zuckert recognizes the ungivenness of the self—“Self is consciousness of self, but the self that comes to consciousness is not a preexisting, self-subsisting entity.” Selfhood involves the constant

constitution and reconfiguration of itself—“[Self] is not, for example, like the idea of sensation, an operation of the mind that occurs independently of reflection in being self-constituted...Self-consciousness is both consciousness and cause of self.”^{clviii} This self named the “person” does not, therefore, exist as a “natural thing,” and Zuckert alludes, without further explication, to “[Henry] Allison’s suggestive comments on the person as an ‘abstract idea.’”^{clix}

Critique of Zuckert (in progress)

On this view, though at times under the guise of a natural law argument, Locke proffers an account of human equality that functions in the absence of a divine lawmaker. Zuckert’s interpretation takes Locke’s equality principle to be “self-constituting” rather than conferred on humanity from an external source. Yet this account immediately encounters one chief theoretical difficulty, a difficulty encapsulated in Zuckert’s claim that the idea of property in the self is an “analytic truth.” For John Locke, the statement “Men are ‘self-owners’” has the character of a “trifling,” or “*barely verbal Proposition.*”

Alike trifling it is, *to predicate any other part of the Definition of the term defined, or to affirm any one of the simple Ideas of a complex one, of the Name of the whole complex Idea...Every Man is an Animal, or living Body, is as certain a Proposition as can be; but no more conducing to the Knowledge of Things...We can know then the Truth of...trifling Propositions...but ‘tis but a verbal Certainty, but not instructive...[W]e cannot make any universal certain Propositions concerning [substances, of which man is one], any farther than our nominal Essences lead us...[T]he general Propositions made about Substances, if they are certain, are for the most part trifling....*^{clx}

Zuckert’s claim that individuals are logically compelled to recognize the mutuality of the proposition of “self-ownership” might be analytically true, though his conclusion that this grounds *natural* rights and *natural* equality cannot be supported with reference to Locke’s epistemology.^{clxi}

While the idea of “self-ownership,” like the idea of “corporeal rationality,” conveys important information about most beings traditionally defined as “human,” it cannot suffice as a concept that delimits a class of “equal” beings. “Self-ownership” captures the unique ability of most human beings to interact with the world in a meaningful way—“To be a self is to be owner of self, proprietor of one’s actions, and actor in terms of one’s happiness, that is, one’s pleasures and pains.”^{clxii} However, Zuckert’s description of the laboring self in no way overcomes the problem of classifying men on an equal basis.

Conclusion

In the final analysis, Zuckert’s argument concerning the non-theistic character of Locke’s political philosophy is essentially correct. Nevertheless, while he acknowledges the political necessity, on Locke’s view, of a “civil religion” for the encouragement of duty and morality, he neglects to recognize a further, politically important role for religion within the context of Locke’s thought—the establishment of equality. On this point, though Waldron mistakes the “real Being” of God and equality in Locke’s account, he distills their important political function in the *Second Treatise*.

Locke’s political philosophy speaks with one voice about the “nature” of human beings and the character of human equality. His epistemology cannot ground particular conceptions of “man,” “species,” and “God,” though it does explain the formation of ideas about these “substances” as well as the composition of “mixed modes,” of which human equality is one. Despite the fact that these ideas lack any “real Being,” Locke is perfectly content to offer his support to certain “suppositions” about “man,” “species,” “God,” and “equality,” for practical politics necessitates just such “suppositions” and “assumptions.”

Contemporary theorists who share with Locke similar philosophical premises about the “nature” of existence might decry his conservative maneuver in favor of definitions and “supposed essences.” He chooses to “fix” our understanding of the “person” rather than focus on the creation of “space[s] of possibility for personhood.”^{clxiii} However, when man is understood as a “limited being,” a certain type of creature with a “natural” end, his opportunities for “becoming” and “creating” are accordingly circumscribed.^{clxiv} To the extent that he considers the negative implications of “fixing” definitions, Locke addresses only the external variety; as his discussion of “species” suggests, defining can be physically “dangerous” to beings primarily concerned with self-preservation. While there are, nonetheless, negative internal consequences to defining “man”—consequences Locke does not consider directly, the *Essay* forces the question: Is some form of general, prescriptive “self”-definition better than none at all?

ⁱ I would like to thank James W. Ceaser and Joshua F. Dienstag for their comments on an earlier version of this paper.

ⁱⁱ John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*. Ed. and Intro. by Peter H. Nidditch. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975) III.vi.27, p. 455.

ⁱⁱⁱ John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government*. Ed. C.B. Macpherson. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1980) 8-9.

^{iv} Locke, *Second Treatise*, 9; Stephen White, “Uncertain Constellations: Dignity, Equality, Respect and...?” Paper presented at the University of Virginia Political Theory Colloquium, Feb. 2005, 5-6.

^v Consider Locke, *Essay*, VI.xviii.10, p. 695. “But whether it be a divine Revelation, or no, *Reason* must judge; which can never permit the Mind to reject a greater Evidence to embrace what is less evident, nor allow it to entertain Probability in opposition to Knowledge and Certainty.” See also Joshua Foa Dienstag, *Dancing in Chains: Narrative and Memory in Political Theory*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997) 48-74, and esp. 48-52.

^{vi} John Dunn, *The Political Thought of John Locke: An Historical Account of the Argument of the “Two Treatises of Government.”* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) 99. Also, Dunn rightly criticizes the “Western parochialism” lurking behind Peter Laslett’s contention that human equality is a “matter” of “common sense.” Peter

Laslett, introduction, *Two Treatises of Government*, by John Locke. Ed. and Intro. by Peter Laslett. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960) 93.

^{vii} For a full critique of the Cambridge interpretation, see Zuckert, “Appropriation and Understanding in the History of Political Philosophy,” *Launching Liberalism*, pp. 57-81. Here is a brief summary of the Cambridge interpretation of Locke: In much of the Locke scholarship, the “problem” of human equality does not arise as a “puzzle” requiring a sophisticated solution or detailed explanation. As indicated above, an initial juxtaposition of the *Essay* and the *Second Treatise* suggests the possibility that Locke’s is a mind fundamentally divided against itself about important philosophical matters. Thus the apparent tensions between the two works make plausible the existing consensus among scholars that Lockean epistemology and Lockean politics are at best tenuously connected, if not wholly incompatible. In recent decades, Peter Laslett and John Dunn have been the most ardent proponents of the “Two Lockes” thesis, pronouncing as follows on the relationship between the *Essay* and the *Second Treatise*: The “two contemporaneous works by the same man” “are scarcely even compatible,” operating from the mutually exclusive premises of empiricism and a religiously inspired innatism. To the extent that Locke’s skeptical epistemology and the politics of equality are “logically” related, such unity derives, they argue, from his dubious attempt to marry faith and reason rather than from a consistent philosophical position. The salience of the Laslett-Dunn position within the discipline of political theory inhibits exploration of the ways in which Lockean epistemology may or may not bear on Lockean politics.

Although the “Two Lockes” thesis has precursors in older exegeses comparing the *Essay* and the *Second Treatise*, Laslett and Dunn infuse the argument with a certain amount of methodological rigor absent from previous iterations. Their approach to the study of political thought generally and Locke specifically owes much to the method of textual interpretation articulated by Quentin Skinner and subsequently associated with a group of political thinkers with ties to Cambridge University. In short, the so-called “Cambridge School” of political thought maintains that in order to understand the meaning embodied in a particular text, one must “decode” the author’s intentions in writing the text through a rigorous interrogation of his historical context. Only by examining the author’s thought in relation to a specific complex of historical circumstances can one grasp the “intended illocutionary force” of his statements (Skinner 61). In the “founding document” of the “Cambridge School”—Skinner’s 1969 essay entitled “Meaning and Understanding in the History of Ideas”—he summarizes the key features of this approach to the study of political thought:

The essential question which we therefore confront, in studying any given text, is what its author, in writing at the time he did write for the audience he intended to address, could in practice have been intending to communicate by the utterance of this given utterance...[One] recover[s] this complex intention on the part of the author...[by] delineat[ing] the whole range of communications which could have been conventionally performed on the given occasion by the utterance of the given utterance, and, next...[by] trac[ing] the relations between the given utterance and this wider *linguistic* context as a means of decoding the actual intention of the given writer...The ‘context’ mistakenly gets treated as the determinant of what is said. It needs rather to be treated as an ultimate framework for helping to decide what conventionally recognizable meanings, in a society of *that* kind, it might in principle have been possible for someone to have intended to communicate (Skinner 63-64)

Laslett’s and Dunn’s application of the method to Locke’s thought results in an interpretation of the latter as a deeply ambivalent response to a combustible “conjunction” of social forces.

For Laslett and Dunn, the “natural law” theory of the *Second Treatise* rests uncomfortably with the empiricism of the *Essay* because competing “modes of discourse” informed Locke’s approach to political and philosophical questions (Zuckert, *LL*, 44) It is no coincidence, they argue, that the contradictions apparent in Locke’s thought parallel the intellectual ferment that convulsed the England of his time. While their formulations of this argument vary slightly, the most general form of the Laslett-Dunn position can be stated as follows: Locke’s political philosophy embodies the “rationale of...[a] transitional stage” in European intellectual history, an era grappling with the vestiges of medieval thinking and the onset of modern rationalism (Dunn 212). On the one hand, his thought assumes the existence of a Creator God as “a proposition of common sense” and displays a palpable, concomitant concern for “the remnants of medieval social values” (Laslett 93; Dunn 212). On the other hand, his hedonistic account of human motivation and the persistent skepticism of the *Essay* represent a sharp break from traditional, Thomistic natural law theory and reveal an affinity for the empirical method of Hobbes (Laslett 82; Dunn 188). While disclosing these disparate sources of inspiration, Locke’s thought affirms the futility of attempts to construct a logically coherent synthesis of reason and revelation. In the end, the “conjunction” of political,

philosophical, and religious controversies “which set [Locke’s] mind at work” on the great issues of his time serves as both cause of and explanation for the disjointed theoretical relationship between the *Essay* and the *Second Treatise* (Zuckert, *LL*, 44, quoting Pocock 204). Interpreters of Locke, according to Laslett, must resign themselves to understanding the attitudinal disposition of “the least consistent of all the great philosophers”: “Natural law was, in this analysis, a part of his rationalism” and had to be “compared with, made to fit into, the observed, empirical facts about the created world and human behavior.” Admittedly, “[t]his position is no easy one to occupy...” (Laslett 82, 88).

Though not technically a “Cambridge” man, Richard Ashcraft follows Laslett and Dunn in reading Locke “historically.” He departs from their analyses, however, in making religion a foundational premise of the *Essay*, thus dissolving the theoretical tension between the *Essay* and the *Second Treatise* identified by Laslett and Dunn. According to Ashcraft, the *Essay* must be understood as a product of its “seventeenth century context,” a context in which “questions of religious dogma...were of the greatest important to Locke’s contemporaries” (Ashcraft 194). Once Locke’s “commitment” to “certain principles of the Christian faith” has been established, the *Essay* appears less like a “manifesto of skepticism”—the charge leveled by several of his contemporaries—and more like a treatise on “the meagerness of human knowledge” relative to the “omniscience of God” (Ashcraft 194-196, 203). In contrast to the Locke of Dunn and Laslett, Ashcraft’s Locke is consistently of one mind, rather than two. The *Essay*, like the *Second Treatise*, “rises from the catacombs of an unshakeable Christian faith” (Ashcraft 214).

At those crucial points in Locke’s thought, when knowledge, reason, philosophy, and history disclose the ignorance and failings of men, and one is led to the brink of the abyss, it is faith that is [in Locke’s own words] ‘allowed to supply the defect’, providing a bridge to the immanent order and the wisdom of God (Ashcraft 223).

While Ashcraft gives short shrift to Locke’s rationalism and employment of a deductive empirical method—two elements of his thought Laslett and Dunn argue stand in tension with his invocation of a “law of nature”—a common theme pervades all three interpretations. For Laslett, Dunn, and Ashcraft, Locke attends as far as possible to the divergent demands of human reason and biblical revelation and the difficulties inherent in their reconciliation. Though this means, in practice, the attribution of many perceived inconsistencies to the theological dimension of his thought, Locke’s reliance on Christian theology to ground many, if not all, elements of his political philosophy necessitates an interpretative stance that acknowledges this commitment.

^{viii} Jeremy Waldron, *God, Locke, and Equality: Christian Foundations in Locke’s Political Thought*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002) 68.

^{ix} I borrow the “anthropological relativism” language from Laslett, introduction, *Two Treatises*, 82n.

^x Locke, *Essay*, III.xi.16, p. 516.

^{xi} *Ibid* II.xxii.4, 8, pp. 289, 291; II.xxxii.10, p. 387.

^{xii} *Ibid* II.xxii.8, 9, pp. 291-292.

^{xiii} *Ibid* II.xxii.4, 12, pp. 289, 294.

^{xiv} *Ibid* III.iv.17, p. 428.

^{xv} *Ibid* II.xxii.2, p. 288; III.xi.16, p. 516.

^{xvi} Michael P. Zuckert, *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) and *Launching Liberalism: On Lockean Political Philosophy*. (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2004).

^{xvii} Locke, *Essay*, III.vi.27, p. 455.

^{xviii} *Ibid* III.vi.5, p. 441.

^{xix} *Ibid* I.ii.2-4, pp. 100-105; III.vi.4, p. 441; According to J.L. Mackie, for an attribute or essence to be “inseparable” from an individual, it must be “that without which it would not be the same individual.” *Problems from Locke*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) 151.

^{xx} Locke, *Essay*, III.vi.4, p. 440.

^{xxi} *Ibid* III.vi.4, p. 441.

^{xxii} *Ibid* III.vi.12, p. 446.

^{xxiii} *Ibid* III.i.6, p. 404.

^{xxiv} *Ibid* III.vi.12, pp. 446-47.

^{xxv} *Ibid* III.vi.12, p. 447; II.i.21, p. 117.

^{xxvi} *Ibid* III.vi.30, p. 458.

^{xxvii} *Ibid* III.vi.1-3, p. 439; See also IV.vii.16, p. 606.

^{xxviii} *Ibid* III.x.10, p. 495; III.vi.27, p. 455.

- ^{xxix} Ibid II.xxvii.28, p. 348.
- ^{xxx} Ibid II.xxvii.29, p. 348.
- ^{xxxi} Ibid II.xxiii.1, p. 295.
- ^{xxxii} Waldron 59, quoting Locke, *Essay*, III.vi.37.
- ^{xxxiii} Locke, *Essay*, III.vi.28, p. 455; III.vi.37, p. 462.
- ^{xxxiv} Waldron 54-59.
- ^{xxxv} Ibid 56-57.
- ^{xxxvi} W.L. Uzgalis, "The Anti-Essential Locke and Natural Kinds," *The Philosophical Quarterly*. Vol. 38, No. 152 (July 1988) 336.
- ^{xxxvii} Locke, *Essay*, III.vi.39, p. 463. The parallel passage addressing "Man," specifically: "No body will doubt, that he Wheels, or Springs (if I may say so) within, are different in a *rational Man*, and a *Changeling*, no more than that there is a difference in the frame between a *Drill* and a *Changeling*. But whether one, or both these differences be essential or specifical is only to be known to us, by their agreement, or disagreement with the complex *Idea* that the name *Man* stands for: For by that alone can it be determined, whether one, or both, or neither of those be a Man, or no," III.vi.39, p. 464.
- ^{xxxviii} Waldron 58.
- ^{xxxix} Locke, *Essay*, I.iv.18, p. 95; Richard Ashcraft, "Faith and Knowledge in Locke's Political Philosophy," *John Locke: Problems and Perspectives*. Ed. John W. Yolton. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969) 206.
- ^{xl} Locke, *Essay*, III.vi.9, p. 444.
- ^{xli} Ashcraft, "Faith and Knowledge," 203.
- ^{xlii} Ibid, 199, 203.
- ^{xliii} I borrow this language from Spellman, who assents to Ashcraft's understanding of the *Essay* as a text intended to highlight the limitations of human knowledge in the face of divine omnipotence, rather than a work of skeptical philosophy. W.M. Spellman, "The Christian Estimate of Man in Locke's 'Essay,'" *The Journal of Religion*. Vol. 67, No. 5 (Oct. 1987) 475, 483.
- ^{xliv} Uzgalis 331.
- ^{lv} Ibid 330, quoting Arthur C. Lovejoy, *The Great Chain of Being: The Study of the History of an Idea*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970) 228-229.
- ^{lvi} Mackie 88, 138.
- ^{lvii} Uzgalis 331-332, quoting Mackie 136.
- ^{lviii} Ashcraft, "Faith and Knowledge," 206.
- ^{lix} Locke, *Essay*, II.xxxii.4-6, p. 385.
- ¹ Ibid III.vi.6, p. 442.
- ^{li} Ibid III.vi.26, 28, pp. 453, 455.
- ^{lii} Ibid II.xxxii.22, p. 392.
- ^{liii} Michael Ayers, *Locke*, 2 vols. Volume II: *Ontology*. (London: Routledge, 1991) 78.
- ^{liv} Laslett, introduction, *Two Treatises*, 82n. See *Essay* IV.vii.16-18, pp. 606-607, where Locke offers three epistemologically legitimate ways of demarcating the species, including one schema in which an English "Child can demonstrate to you, that a *Negro is not a Man*, because White-colour was one of the constant simple *Ideas* of the complex *Idea* he calls *Man*...." Locke's point here is twofold. First, we define the species based on our experiential encounters with the world: "...[A] child, having framed the *Idea* of a *Man*, it is probably that his *Idea* is just like that picture, which the Painter makes of the visible Appearances joyned together; and such a Complication of *Ideas* together in his Understanding, makes up the single complex *Idea* which he calls *Man*, whereof White or Flesh-colour in *England* being one...." Second, in spite of the contingent nature of "species" definitions, men should not "take Words for Things." In other words, our making definitional statements is a) inevitable and b) "dangerous," IV.vii.20, p. 608.
- ^{lv} "For though Men uniting into politick Societies, have resigned up to the publick the disposing of all their Force, so that they cannot employ it against any Fellow-Citizen, any farther than the Law of the Country directs...." II.xxviii.10, p. 353.
- ^{lvi} I borrow they language of "dynamism" from Ian Hacking's discussion of "dynamic nominalism" in *Historical Ontology*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), see esp. 48-50 and 100-120.
- ^{lvii} Ibid III.xi.11, p. 514; III.ix.3, p. 476.

- ^{lviii} Moral discourses concern moral relations, or the “Conformity, or Disagreement, Men’s voluntary Actions have to a Rule,” II.xxviii.4, p. 350
- ^{lix} Ibid III.xi.16, p. 516.
- ^{lx} See III.ix.3 for the distinction between “civil” and “philosophical” discourse. See III.x.6-12 for Locke’s critique of the philosopher’s unsettling common notions of “Religion and Justice” though “*affected Obscurity*.”
- ^{lxi} Ibid II.xxiii.12, p. 294.
- ^{lxii} Ibid III.v.7, p. 431.
- ^{lxiii} Ibid III.v.5-7, pp. 430-432.
- ^{lxiv} Ibid III.v.10, p. 434.
- ^{lxv} Ibid III.xi.17, p. 517.
- ^{lxvi} Ibid III.xi.17, p. 517.
- ^{lxvii} Ibid III.v.6, p. 430.
- ^{lxviii} Ibid II.xi.17, p. 517.
- ^{lxix} Ibid III.xi.15, p. 516.
- ^{lxx} William T. Bluhm, Stuart H. Teger, and Neil Wintfeld, “Locke’s Idea of God: Rational Truth or Political Myth.” *The Journal of Politics*. 42.2 (1980): 414-438.
- ^{lxxi} Locke, *Essay*, IV.x.1, p. 619.
- ^{lxxii} Ayers, *Locke*. Volume II: *Ontology*, 182; Ashcraft, “Faith and Knowledge,” 205; Leo Strauss, *Natural Right and History*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953) 207, cites Locke’s “Letter to the Bishop of Worcester,” *The Works of John Locke in Nine Volumes*, Twelfth Edition. (London: Rivington, 1824). Vol. 3, 353-54, in which he admits to Stillingfleet that he deliberately concealed the weakness of his purported demonstration of God’s existence.
- ^{lxxiii} Locke, *Essay*, IV.x.18, p. 629. Of such attempted demonstrations in general, Eric Voegelin observes, “[S]cholastic proofs for God, including the Cartesian, do not have the aim of assuring the thinker who employs this proof of the existence of God. The existence of God for the Christian thinkers from Anselm of Canterbury to Descartes is known from other sources. The proof is, however, the stylistic form of scholastic thinking, and the demonstration in this style is extended to problems that are not susceptible of a demonstration, and in no way need one. Certainly all the proofs of God are logically untenable....” “Letter from Voegelin to Alfred Schutz on Edmund Husserl,” September 17, 1943, in *Faith and Political Philosophy: The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, 1934-1964*. Ed. and Trans. Barry Cooper and Peter Emberley. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993) 32-33.
- ^{lxxiv} Bluhm, Teger, and Wintfeld, 423.
- ^{lxxv} Wintfeld et al., 423; Locke, *Essay*, II.xxiii.1, 2, 33, 35, pp. 295, 314-315.
- ^{lxxvi} Locke, *Essay*, II.xxiii.2, p. 296.
- ^{lxxvii} Ibid II.xxiii.33, p. 314.
- ^{lxxviii} Ibid.
- ^{lxxix} Wintfeld et al., 425.
- ^{lxxx} Locke, *Essay*, IV.viii.8-9, pp. 614-615.
- ^{lxxxi} Ibid IV.viii.9, p. 615.
- ^{lxxxii} Ibid IV.viii.9, p. 615.
- ^{lxxxiii} Ibid IV.xi.12, p. 637.
- ^{lxxxiv} Ibid IV.xi.1, p. 630.
- ^{lxxxv} Zuckert, “John Locke and the Problem of Civil Religion,” *The Moral Foundations of the American Republic*. Ed. Robert H. Horowitz, 3rd ed. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1986) 202-203.
- ^{lxxxvi} Locke, *Essay*, II.xi.9, p. 159.
- ^{lxxxvii} Waldron 80.
- ^{lxxxviii} Michael P. Zuckert, “Civil Religion,” 195-197.
- ^{lxxxix} Waldron 59.
- ^{xc} Ibid 78-79.
- ^{xc1} Ibid 66.
- ^{xcii} Locke, *Second Treatise*, 170
- ^{xciii} Waldron 66.
- ^{xciv} Ibid 76.

- ^{xcv} “Now among the very grossest differences in mental capacity, Locke is evidently not committed to any thesis of equality. That is, he is not committed to following our nominal conception of humanity where it leads, and to drawing a rationality-line that will include all whom we pre-theoretically describe as human,” Waldron 73.
- ^{xcvi} Ibid 73.
- ^{xcvii} Locke, *Essay*, III.vi.12, p. 447.
- ^{xcviii} Waldron 49, 80.
- ^{xcix} Ibid 79-80.
- ^c Ibid 75, 79, quoting Locke, *Essay*, “Introduction,” I.i.5, p. 45.
- ^{ci} Waldron 71, 79.
- ^{cii} Ibid 75, 80-81.
- ^{ciii} Ibid 80.
- ^{civ} Ibid 95.
- ^{cv} Waldron 215, 233, cites John Marshall, *John Locke: Resistance, Religion and Responsibility*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994) 337-350, and W.M. Spellman, *John Locke and the Problem of Depravity*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1988) 129 ff, on the question of Locke’s possible Socianism and Spellman, *John Locke and the Problem of Depravity*, 130 on accusations of atheism leveled against Locke. See also Dewey D. Wallace, Jr., “Socianism, Justification by Faith, and The Sources of John Locke’s *The Reasonableness of Christianity*,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*. Vol. 45, No. 1 (Jan.-Mar. 1984) 49-66. Richard Ashcraft, “Faith and Knowledge,” 214.
- ^{cvi} Locke, *Essay*, IV.vii.9, p. 596.
- ^{cvii} Waldron 56, 66.
- ^{cviii} Ibid 56-57.
- ^{cix} Ibid 56-57.
- ^{cx} Ibid 75.
- ^{cxii} Ibid 68.
- ^{cxiii} Locke, *Essay*, III.xi.16, p. 516.
- ^{cxiiii} Ibid III.xi.16-17, pp. 516-517.
- ^{cxv} Waldron 67, quoting Locke, *Essay*, III.xi.16, pp. 516-517.
- ^{cxvi} Ibid 78-79.
- ^{cxvii} Ibid 68.
- ^{cxviii} Ibid 67.
- ^{cxviiii} Ibid 234.
- ^{cxix} Ibid 96; Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, Essay VII, in *Locke: Political Essays*. Ed. Mark Goldie. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997) 120.
- ^{cxix} Locke, *Essay*, II.xi.9, p. 159
- ^{cxxi} Ibid II.xxxii.6, p. 386.
- ^{cxviii} Ibid III.vi.25-26, p. 452; IV.vii.9, p. 596.
- ^{cxviii} Ibid III.vi.26, p. 453.
- ^{cxviii} Ibid II.xxxii.8, p. 386.
- ^{cxv} Ibid IV.xi.14, p. 638.
- ^{cxv} Ibid II.xxxii.18, p. 390.
- ^{cxvii} Ibid II.xxix.2, 6, 20, pp. 349, 351, 362.
- ^{cxviii} Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, in *Locke: Political Essays*, 120.
- ^{cxviii} Waldron 228, quoting Locke, *A Letter Concerning Toleration*, 51.
- ^{cxv} Waldron 226-228.
- ^{cxv} Ibid 45.
- ^{cxv} Ibid 48, 81.
- ^{cxv} Ibid 63.
- ^{cxv} Zuckert, *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism*, 278.
- ^{cxv} Zuckert, *Launching Liberalism*, 5.
- ^{cxv} Ibid.
- ^{cxv} Ibid 4.
- ^{cxv} Strauss 221.

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- cxviii Locke, *Second Treatise*, 14. Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*. Ed. Edwin Curley. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, 1994) 79.
- cxl Hobbes 74-75.
- cxli Ibid 75.
- cxlii Strauss 196, 198.
- cxliii “When two names are joined together into a consequence or affirmation (as thus, *a man is a living creature*, or thus, *if he be a man, he is a living creature*), if the latter name, *living creature*, signify all that the former name, *man*, signifieth, then the affirmation of consequence is *true*; otherwise false. For *true* and *false* are attributes of speech, not of things. And where speech is not, there is neither *truth* nor *falsehood*. *Error* there may be, as when we expect that which shall not be, or suspect what has not been; but in neither case can a man be charged with untruth,” Hobbes 18.
- cxliv Zuckert, *Launching Liberalism*, 3.
- cxlv Locke, *Essay*, III.vi.12, p. 447.
- cxlvi Zuckert, *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism*, 276.
- cxlvii Zuckert, *Launching Liberalism*, 196.
- cxlviii Locke, *Second Treatise*, 19.
- cxlix Zuckert, *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism*, 266.
- cl Locke, *Second Treatise*, 19.
- cli Zuckert, *Launching Liberalism*, 6.
- clii Zuckert, *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism*, 277.
- cliii Ibid 277-278.
- cliv Ibid.
- clv Zuckert, *Launching Liberalism*, 9.
- clvi Hobbes 78.
- clvii Zuckert, *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism*, 283.
- clviii Ibid 281.
- clix Ibid 280n (370).
- clx Locke, *Essay*, IV.viii.5, 6, 8, 9, pp. 612-615.
- clxi Zuckert, *Natural Rights and the New Republicanism*, 276.
- clxii Waldron 285.
- clxiii Hacking 107. Locke explicitly “fixes” the definition of “person” in II.xxvii.26, p. 346. “Where-ever a man finds what he calls *himself*, there I think another may say is the same *Person*. It is a Forensick Term appropriating Actions and their Merit; and so belongs only to intelligent Agents capable of a Law, and Happiness and Misery.”
- clxiv I borrow the “limited being” language from Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*. Ed. and Trans. Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller, and Harold Samuel Stone. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989) I.i, p. 5.

