

The Epistemological Roots of John Locke's Theory of Toleration

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"A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of M.A."

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Abstract

Locke's defence of toleration in the Letters concerning Toleration, is underpinned by two pillars, one political, the other epistemological. When these Letters are examined closely, one notices that the balance between politics and epistemology, which characterizes the first, and to a lesser degree the second Letter, shifts discernably to a reliance on epistemology alone in the third one. Unfortunately, the brevity of his epistemological reflections in the third Letter prevents one from judiciously ascertaining the strength of the argument which it underpins.

Few scholars who have concerned themselves with a consideration of Locke's Letters, have deemed the detailed examination of epistemology in the Essay as being of value to one's understanding of the defence of toleration. I am not of this opinion, for I feel that unless the Essay is carefully examined and the analytic connexion with the Letters discerned, the epistemological underpinnings of Locke's defence of toleration cannot be fully understood.

Abstrait

La défense de la tolération de Locke dans ses Lettres concernant la Tolération est soutenue par deux piliers, un politique, et l'autre épistémologique. En examinant avec attention ses Lettres, on peut remarquer que l'équilibre entre ses idées politiques et épistémologique qui caractérise la première et la deuxième Lettre, change visiblement en faveur de l'épistémologie dans la troisième. Mais malheureusement, dans cette Lettre, la brièveté de ses réflexions épistémologique nous empêche de déterminer judicieusement la force de sa thèse.

Il y en a peu d'academiciens qui ont prêté leurs attention aux Lettres de Locke, et on trouve qu'un examen minutieux de l'épistémologie dans l'Essai sera d'une grande valeur pour mieux comprendre la défense de la tolération. Je ne suis pas de même avis, car je pense que l'Essai doit être examiné avec beaucoup d'attention pour que la connection analytique avec les Lettres soit bien établie. Quand ses deux buts seront accomplis, notre compréhension sur la défense de la tolération sera complète.

Acknowledgements

This thesis could not have been completed without the aid of a number of people. The lectures by Professor James Tully initially aroused my interest in Locke and his views on toleration. As my advisor, Professor Tully's analytic talents and his vast knowledge of Locke's philosophy were always at my disposal when I needed it most. When I found myself confronting an epistemological impasse, the critical consideration of Stephen Walker provided me with the benefit of a second opinion on these problems. Of no less importance was the moral support lent to me by Debbie Higgins, and especially Hanna Zowall. To Martha and Jacob Soare, my parents, I am particularly indebted: their understanding and sympathy towards my emotional eccentricities and taciturn nature afforded me the encouragement to continue in my pursuits when I was most unsure of myself. Finally, a special word of thanks must be extended to Roberta Garnham whose efficiency and concern in the preparation of my thesis, makes me forever grateful for her efforts.

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Introduction

The Restoration of the monarchy in 1660 brought along with it a parliament whose attitude towards non-conformists and dissenters was marked by animosity and vindictiveness. In part, this was due to its fear of insurrection, but in the main, members wanted to ensure themselves that a non-Anglican ascendancy would never again come about.

When Charles II tried introducing a small measure of indulgence with his declaration at Breda, his words were quickly struck down, and shortly thereafter the Act of Uniformity was passed (1662). Then in rapid succession, Parliament passed the Conventicle Act (1664), the Five Mile Act (1665), and a second Conventicle Act on the expiration of the first (1670). In 1672, when Charles again introduced a modified Act of Indulgence, Parliament not only opposed it steadfastly, but in its place passed one of the most severe and repressive of all anti-toleration acts, the Test Act (1673). It was not until William and Mary ascended to the throne, as a result of the Glorious Revolution, that Parliament allowed a measure of toleration to be extended to a limited number of non-conformists: the Toleration Act (1689). The attainment of a full range of political and religious rights would not be extended to all non-Anglicans until 1832.

The Toleration Act did little to attenuate the persecution of the majority of non-conformists and dissenters, nor did it temper Locke's attitude towards this reprehensible practice. But Locke's earliest reflections on the question of toleration can be found in two unpublished essays that were written in 1660-1661, which Philip Abrams entitles the Two Tracts on Government

(1967). Although these early works were rather authoritarian in character, it was not long before Locke's views on toleration moderated. The more relaxed attitude that is characteristic of his mature writings on toleration can first be discerned in another unpublished manuscript entitled an "Essay Concerning Toleration," which was written in 1667. However, it was not until 1685, while he was in exile in Holland, that he once more addressed the issue of toleration, at length.

His Epistola de Tolerantia was not published until 1689 at Gouda and when it was, it was done so anonymously and in Latin. In the fall of that same year, William Popple, a unitarian merchant translated it and A Letter Concerning Toleration was published in England, but again this was done anonymously. Then in response to the attacks of Jonas Proast, his most ardent critic, Locke published three anonymous replies under the pseudonym of "Philanthropus": A Second Letter Concerning Toleration (1690), A Third Letter for Toleration (1692), and A Fourth Letter for Toleration (1704), which was never completed due to Locke's death in that same year (Romaneli, 1978).¹

The importance of Locke's Letter in the history of toleration, like the importance of the Two Treatises on Government, in the building of civil liberty, lies not in its novelty, not in any remarkable or radical liberty. His words were persuasive in their age because of the orderliness and reasonableness and philosophical temper (Gough, 1950: p. 220).

Gough's statement is somewhat misadroit, for Locke's words were not as persuasive to those in his age as they are to those who look back upon them from ours. One of the things that makes Locke's defence of toleration attractive to the twentieth century scholar is that he chooses to deal with

the volatile issue of religious intolerance, by being reasonable and calm, and by using language which is plain and simple yet addresses the issue directly. Were the issue of religious intolerance to be explored by a modern philosopher, as it often is, Locke's approach and literary style would have much to offer him as a model.

But it is not Locke's literary abilities alone that make his arguments for toleration important. What is of greater significance is that he was one of the first scholars to underpin an argument for toleration with epistemological considerations. Therefore, if one wants to understand fully Locke's defence of toleration, a careful examination of his epistemology is imperative. Unfortunately, in this regard, the Letters do not afford one much detail. Consequently, it is to the Essay Concerning Human Understanding, his main epistemological work which was published in 1690, that one's attention should be directed.

In the early months of 1671, Locke engaged himself in a number of philosophical discussions on "the principles of morality and revealed religion" with five or six friends. As a result of these discussions, and upon the prodding of his friends who insisted that he pursue the topics discussed at length, in writing, Locke produced two crude drafts of what would later be the Essay (Cranston, 1957). Unlike his two other major works both of which were published anonymously in 1689, Locke chose to reveal the authorship of the Essay when it was published in 1689. During the 1690s, Locke kept himself busy by producing three replies to the criticisms of Edward Stillingfleet, Bishop of Worcester, and carefully revising the Essay for the three other editions that were published in English during his

lifetime (in 1694, 1695, 1700). Furthermore, he supervised a French translation, and took some interest in the preparation of a Latin translation (1700, 1701) (Nidditch, 1978).²

Although the analytic connection between the Letters and the Essay is an integral part of Locke's defence of toleration, few scholars have addressed themselves to an examination of this relation. Standardly, one of two unsatisfactory approaches has been employed. The first reflects the belief that Locke's primary concern in writing the Letters was to posit a political defence of toleration. Consequently, his epistemological arguments are seen as being of secondary importance, and as such, they are treated cursorily. The second approach attempts to understand Locke's defence of toleration by placing him within an intellectual context. However, the works of the scholars who employ this approach are of a general character, and this precludes them from offering a detailed analysis either of Locke's epistemology or his views on toleration.

Gordon Schochet (1980) is one of a number of scholars who believes that Locke's toleration argument is primarily a political statement and as such must be viewed from this perspective. He neither examines the epistemological debates of which Locke was a part, nor does he choose to explore the relevance of Locke's Essay to the toleration issue.

J.W. Gough (1950) and J.D. Mabbott (1973) are less narrow in their approaches, in that they do carefully map out the disparate components of Locke's argument, but like Schochet, they choose not to explore fully the relation between the Essay and the Letters. For one who is interested in

determining whether the epistemological considerations of the Essay afford a viable measure of support for Locke's defence of toleration in the Letters, a detailed analysis of the Letters alone, or an examination of the political arguments but not the epistemological ones, is not wholly satisfying.

The works of scholars such as G.R. Cragg (1966), Richard Popkin (1979) and Henry Van Leeuwn (1963) are quite helpful in recovering the historical meaning of Locke's epistemological arguments. Cragg does this by examining the works of the Cambridge Platonists, the Latitudinarians and the Deists. The intellectual spectrum of Popkin's and Van Leeuwn's spectrum is much wider, ranging from the Reformation debates on the Rule of Faith to the sceptical considerations of a number of Latitudinarians and Royal Scientists. With respect to Locke, they share the conviction that he is a figure of central importance to philosophical debates of the 17th century; however, the general character of their works does not allow them the opportunity to carefully examine his texts to the degree that would please a Locke scholar.

Both John Dunn (1969b) and James Tully (1980b) have produced works on Locke of singular quality: their examinations of his main texts are precise, and their attempts to discern the historical meanings of these texts add much insight to one's understanding of them. This notwithstanding, the relation between epistemology and toleration is a subject they have not fully broached as of yet, although comments on the subject do arise in their work in a number of instances. Therefore, the gap in Lockean scholarship concerning the epistemological foundations of tolerance remains to be

filled.

My own analysis makes no claim to being an exhaustive one, but it will attempt to balance carefully analysis and contextualization in an eclectic fashion, and apply it to the study of the epistemological underpinnings to Locke's theory of toleration.

The main objective of the thesis is to prove that Locke's most viable defence of toleration in the Letters, an epistemological one, can be fully understood only if the detailed epistemological considerations of the Essay are examined. To make this evident, the thesis is divided into three chapters.

In the first chapter, I examine Locke's two main arguments for toleration the first being derived from political considerations, the second from epistemological ones: then I ascertain their strengths and weaknesses. Following this, I provide an explanation as to why the careful balance between the political and epistemological defence of toleration, that marked the first Letter, has changed discernably, in the favour of epistemology alone, in the second and third Letters. Finally, I examine Locke's epistemological reflections in the second and third Letters, and determine whether Locke's singular dependence on epistemology affords his defence of toleration a solid foundation.

An indirect way of obtaining a more complete understanding of Locke's epistemology, particularly his views on certainty, is to examine the works of fellow scholars who concerned themselves with similar issues. This also

allows one to recover the historical meaning of Locke's arguments. In order to fulfill both these goals, the second chapter situates Locke's arguments in a stream of intellectual thought running from the Reformation to the post-Restoration period. In particular, the works of Richard Hooker (1553-1600), a staunch defender of the Elizabethan church, and of William Chillingworth (1602-1643) and John Tillotson (1630-1694), two outspoken Latitudinarians, are examined and their reflections on certainty carefully considered.

Whereas Locke's epistemological reflections in the Letters are cursory and lacking in depth, Locke's Essay is systematic and detailed in its considerations on the subject. In the third chapter, I delineate the main questions that Locke addresses in the Essay. In examining his considerations on the origin and certainty of moral ideas, one finds that Locke's position is an equivocal one: he waivers between rational conventionalism and rational theism. How this leads to an epistemological impasse of sorts is outlined. But this impasse notwithstanding, I demonstrate that either one of the two epistemological positions that Locke adopts in the Essay affords to his epistemological defence of toleration in the Letters a considerable measure of support.

By combining contextualization in the second chapter with textual analysis in the third, the epistemological underpinnings to Locke's defence of toleration in the first chapter can best be appreciated. Furthermore, this also allows one to narrow considerably the wide gap in Lockean scholarship on the relation between epistemology and toleration.

Introduction: Footnotes

1. Locke's mature works on toleration, 1689-1704, can be found in his Collected Works (1823: v, VI). When his Letters Concerning Toleration are cited, they will be referred to as the Letters. Furthermore, to simplify the identification of passages for those who employ different editions, I cite the Letter and page number and place them in brackets.
2. In my examination of Locke's Essay Concerning the Human Understanding, I have employed Peter Nidditch's critical edition (1978), and when it is cited, it will be referred to as the Essay. Once again to simplify the identification of citations, I refer to the book, chapter and selection numbers and place these alone in brackets.

CHAPTER 1: The Three Letters Concerning Toleration¹

I. The First Letter

1. If a man

be destitute of charity, meekness, and goodwill in general towards all mankind, even to those that are not true Christians, he is certainly yet short of being a true Christian himself (1.5).

Can a man who allows others to suffer the torments of physical abuse merely because of their dissent or non-conformity to the national religion in England be thought of as a Christian? Is he acting out of spirit of charity and concern for the well being of others, when he

deprive(s) them of their estates, maim(s) them with corporal punishments, starve(s) and torment(s) them in noisome prisons [?]

To Locke, persecution based on dissent and non-conformity to the national religion, especially in a Christian province such as England, is wholly unjustified and it is antithetical to his perception of the Christian ideal. Those who wield the sword in the name of Christ choose to violate and ignore the example that Christ, Prince of Peace, provides: He had

sent out his soldiers to the subduing of nations, gathering them to his church, not armed with the sword, or other instruments of force, but prepared with the Gospel of peace, and with the exemplary holiness of their conversation (1.8-9).

Words and gentle persuasion were the weapons of Christ's disciples in his own time, and they are no less effective at the present.

But Locke realizes that the persecution of dissenters and non-conformists is not founded on emotional reasons alone; its advocates do

posit philosophical justifications for their attitude. Therefore, to defend toleration and attack intolerance concurrently, Locke must first ascertain what the pillars of the arguments held by his opponents are. He concludes that:

to justify bringing any such evil two things are requisite. First, that he who does it has commission and power to do so. Secondly, that it be directly useful for the procuring some greater good (2.112).

This statement clearly enunciates what Locke feels are the two main pillars of intolerance. The first, a political argument, reflects the belief that a magistrate has the right to intervene in religious matters. The second, an epistemological argument, implies that the enforced persecution of dissenters and non-conformists leads them to the one true religion, the only religion which can secure their eternal interests. Locke wants to show that both these arguments are derived from fallacious assumptions, and this is as evident in the second Letter, which was the source of this citation, as it is in the first or the third ones.

The efficacy of Locke's attack on the political pillar of intolerance is contingent upon his making it clear that the magistrate never was given the authority to intervene in religious matters. To make this evident, Locke posits a two step argument. First, he shows that men entering into a political association with one another limited a magistrate's authority to civil matters alone; and that secondly, these actions separated the realm of the state from that of the church.

Locke's epistemological argument is founded on the assumption that the magistrate's understanding is no less fallible than anyone else's in knowing of

(the true religion, or the path to salvation. Therefore, even if Locke's distinction between state and church is itself fallacious, the magistrate should not persecute those who disagree with his religious convictions, for his path is not necessarily the true one; he would not be bringing them to a greater good if he forced them to conform to what he thinks is the true religion. Although Locke's epistemological reflections are rather cursory in the first Letter, his singular dependence on them in the third, and to a lesser degree, the second Letter as well, affords to these preliminary remarks a great deal of importance.

2. The pravity of mankind being such, that they had rather injuriously prey upon the fruits of other men's labours, than take the pains to provide for themselves; the necessity of preserving men in the possession of what honest industry has acquired and also of preserving their liberty and strength, whereby they may acquire what they farther want, obliges men to enter into society with one another; that by mutual assistance and joint force, they may secure unto each other their properties, in the things that contribute to the comforts and happiness of this life (1.42).

The necessity of protecting themselves from the greed of others provided men with a sufficient reason to leave the state of nature and to enter into a political association, or commonwealth, with one another. This commonwealth was

a society of men constituted only for the procuring, preserving and advancing their own civil interests.

Civil interest I call life, liberty, health and indolency of body, and the possession of outward things such as money, lands, houses, furniture, and the like (1.9-10).

(Upon their entering into the political association, men came to realize that their civil interests could best be served if one impartial figure was authorized to defend them: as a result the magistrate came to be the figure

in whom this responsibility lay. Locke emphasizes that the protection of civil interests alone was the responsibility of the magistrate. Spiritual matters were left in the hands of individuals.

This assumption is plausible, but it is neither self-evident, as Locke might want us to believe, nor necessary. One could well imagine a state of nature where the protection of spiritual and civil rights is entrusted to a Sovereign; and this assumption is no less plausible than Locke's. Indeed, as will be seen in the second Letter, Jonas Proast delivers a scathing attack on Locke's state of nature theory, one which is not without effect on Locke's reflections in the third Letter.

If the magistrate's authority is limited to the defence and protection of civil interests alone, then it is clear that he has no right to intervene in matters of worship, be they external or internal. This notwithstanding there are two exceptions to this rule: the practices of Catholics and Atheists are not to be tolerated. Locke justifies this intolerant attitude by arguing that the political allegiances of both groups are unsure, therefore to allow them the right to externally manifest their beliefs is dangerous to the political stability of society.

Locke's explicit reference to the uncertainty concerning the foreign allegiances of the Mahomettans is clearly a tacit allusion to the Catholics, whose threat to the political stability of England is much more apparent than that posed by the Mahomettans (1.46-47). By being Catholic, one's allegiance is to the Pope first and then to the sovereign of England, and this necessarily undermines his authority. Therefore, their particular manner

(of worship ought not to be tolerated.

As to Atheists, they are not to be tolerated because they deny the being of God. In doing so, they destroy the foundation upon which the promises, covenants and oaths that bind men together in a political society rests (1.47). Aside from the practices of Catholics and Atheists, if the inward or outward modes of worship of other groups pose no threat to the civil interests of his subjects, the magistrate has not the authority to intervene.

For example, if an otherwise indifferent and practical act such as bathing a child can be shown to prevent illness in children, then the magistrate may deem that the interests of all children would best be served were there to be a law calling for all of them to be bathed. But this notwithstanding,

will anyone, therefore, say, that the magistrate has the same right to ordain, by law, that all children shall be baptized by priests, in the sacred font, in order to the purification of their souls (1.30)?

Whereas the first act clearly concerns the magistrate in that his actions protect the lives of his subjects, indifferent religious ceremonies such as baptism concern the spiritual not civil interests of his subjects; and as long as their civil interests are not threatened by such acts, the magistrate has no legitimate right to intervene.

(As to speculative opinions, or matters of inward faith, once again, unless the civil interests of his subjects are directly threatened, the magistrate can neither intervene lawfully nor impose his will on them:

the business of laws is not to provide for the truth of opinions, but for the safety and security of the commonwealth, and of every man's goods and person (1.40).

Therefore,

If a Roman Catholic believe that to be really the body of Christ, which another man calls bread, he does no injury thereby to his neighbour. If a Jew does not believe the New Testament to be the word of God, he does not thereby alter anything in men's civil rights (1.40)

3. Having defined a civil society and the rights and obligations that a magistrate has towards it, what remains to be determined is the structure of men's spiritual society, and the rights and obligations they have within it. }

The end of a religious society ... is the public worship of God, and by means thereof, the acquisition of eternal life. All discipline ought therefore to tend in that end, and all ecclesiastical laws to be thereunto confined (1.16).

A religious society, or church, concerns itself solely with the spiritual and not the civil interests of its members. Furthermore, those who join it, do so freely, and out of a common concern for their salvation (1.13). They are not forced to be a part of it by the threat of punishment or persecution.

Each church is left free to determine the character of its ceremonies and manners of worship, it is self-governing. This is clearly in opposition to those who believe that a proper church must have

a bishop, or presbyter, with ruling authority derived from the very apostles, and continued down unto the present time by an uninterrupted succession (1.14).

A true church is one comprised of all believers, and it does not require a hierarchy to determine precisely the manner that their piety should be

expressed. On this point, the Scriptures are quite clear: "wheresoever two or three are gathered together in his name, he will be in the midst of them" (1.14).

But if a church is solely a religious society and has no authority to employ compulsory power to enforce its laws on its members, how is it to survive? To this question, Locke's Letter provides two answers. The first is that a spiritual society is comprised of members who have joined it freely, therefore they should be no less free to disassociate themselves from it when they conclude that their beliefs are not one with those of the church. Secondly, since true faith is a matter of inward belief (1.10-11) even if the church had compulsive power, it would only obtain outward conformity not inward belief were this power to be applied. The members of a religious society can employ "exhortation, admonitions and advice" to convince dissenters of the errors of their ways. Then if they persist in their dissent, Locke argues that they "should be cast out and separated from the society" (1.16). But

(this) is the last and utmost force of ecclesiastical authority: no other punishment can thereby be inflicted, than that the relation ceasing between the body and the member which is cut off, the person so condemned ceases to be a part of that church (1.16).

The excommunication of a dissenting member is as radical a step as a church may take; enforced conformity or corporal punishment clearly are illegitimate measures whereby consent is obtained. When this argument is complimented by the one whereby all magisterial authority in spiritual matters, aside from when civil interests are threatened, is illegitimate, then it becomes evident that a dissenter should suffer no torments as a

consequence of his beliefs: neither the magistrate, for the reasons mentioned previously, nor the members of his spiritual society, have the right to enforce their beliefs on those who choose to dissent.

4. Epistemologically, which doctrines are the truest, and whose worship is the purest cannot be known with certainty. This is particularly true of priests and prelates who dogmatically and ostentaciously pretend that they are the purveyors of a divinely inspired word.

Whatsoever any church believes, it believes to be true; and the contrary thereunto it pronounces to be error. So that the controversy between these churches about the truth of their doctrines, and the purity of their worship, is on both sides equal; nor is there any judge, either at Constantinople, or elsewhere upon earth, by whose sentence it can be determined (1.18-19).

To Locke, the magistrate is no better guide to salvation than are the priests and prelates of the church, or for that matter, any of his subjects.

The one narrow way which leads to heaven is not better known to the magistrate than to private persons, and therefore I cannot safely take him for my guide, and who certainly is less concerned for my salvation than I myself am (1.26).

Indeed, were the magistrate to have the right to intervene in religious matters and impose his beliefs on all dissenters and non-conformists, it is not at all evident that a greater good would be served. For his uncertainty concerning the true religion effectively prevents him from arguing that enforced conformity will bring them closer to the certain path of salvation.

Clearly, if men

were put under a necessity to quit the light of their own reason, to oppose the dictates of their consciences, and blindly resign themselves to the will of their governors, and to the religion, which either ignorance, ambition, or superstition had chanced to establish in the countries where they were born (1.12),

then it is quite probable that they would be led away from the true religion rather than closer to it. "[T]here are a thousand ways to wealth, but one only way to heaven" (1.24), and the sword applied to dissenters is no certain sign that the wielder certainly knows that his is the true way.

5. Locke believes that his two-pronged assault on intolerance has afforded to his defence of toleration a measure of respectability. He has shown that a civil society is separate from a spiritual one. Consequently, a civil magistrate has no authority in spiritual matters, and a church cannot physically punish men for their spiritual dissent. Furthermore, he has made it apparent that even if a magistrate were to have spiritual authority, his inability to know of the true religion with certainty means that enforced conformity to his religion will not necessarily bring men closer to the true path to salvation; it will not bring them to a greater good. But the second and particularly the third Letter make it apparent that his confidence in the political argument is somewhat unfounded.

II. The Second and Third Letters

1. In the first Letter, Locke had argued that men, being in the state of nature, found that others encroached upon their possessions. To secure their interests, they decided that they should join together into a political society, a commonwealth. A magistrate was given the authority to secure and defend their civil interests, but as to their spiritual ones, this was left in their own hands. As was previously mentioned, this assumption is plausible but neither self-evident nor necessary. Indeed, Proast sees Locke as having made a fallacious assumption concerning the state of nature, which leads him to

beg the question." Locke assumes that his state of nature theory is viable, and thereafter he employs it to argue that the domain of the state is separate from that of the church; but nowhere has he shown that either the initial theory or the conclusion derived from it are founded on necessary, or even the most plausible, of assumptions.

Locke's reply to this accusation is itself rather pointed:

The question is, whether civil society be instituted only for civil ends? You say no; and your proof is, because doubtless it is instituted for other ends. If I now say, doubtless this is a good argument; is not everyone bound without more ado to admit it for such? If not, doubtless you are in danger to be thought to beg the question (2.117).

If he himself is vulnerable to question begging, then Locke wants to make it perfectly clear that Proast is no less guilty of fallacious reasoning. This is because Proast's own argument leads to an absurd conclusion. If, as Proast claims, all societies are instituted for one and the same end, namely, the attainment of all the benefits that they can in any way yield, as Proast assumes (2.117), then it follows that

there will be no difference between church and state; a commonwealth and an army; or between a family, and the East India Company; all which have hitherto been thought distinct sorts of societies, instituted for different ends. If your hypothesis hold good, one of the ends of the family must be to preach the Gospel, and administer the sacraments; and one business of an army to teach languages, and propogate religion; because these are benefits some way or another attainable by those societies (1.117-118).

The reduction of Proast's statement to its absurd conclusion indeed makes it appear to be foolish, but it does not demonstrate that Locke's own argument is any more plausible than Proast's is.

Locke has asserted that men who entered into a political commonwealth decided that the magistrate would have civil authority alone; spiritual matters were not his concern. A tacit assumption in Proast's argument is that it is no less plausible to assume that the magistrate has given authority in both domains. Both arguments are fallacious and beg the question because neither of them prove that the premises which underpin their arguments are true ones, although Locke and Proast both believe that their own premises are indeed true. But at the same time, both arguments are valid, but not sound ones, in that their conclusions follow logically from the premises. From an epistemological perspective, the arguments of Locke and Proast are of equal stature, be it an absurd or a firm one.

2. Let us recall a statement cited earlier in the first section:

to justify the bringing any such evil upon any man, two things are requisite. First, That he who does it has commission, and power to do so. Secondly, That it be directly useful for the procuring some greater good (2.112).

It is evident that Locke's political attack on intolerance is founded on a weak and arbitrary assumption. Perhaps, Locke's almost singular dependence on epistemology for his defence of toleration in the third Letter, and to a lesser extent in the second one, reflects his tacit admission of this.²

If one wants to ascertain whether Locke's epistemological dependence lessens his susceptibility to criticism, then a number of minor epistemological arguments, as well as his major one, must first be considered.

3. Locke believes that forcing dissenters and non-conformists to conform to the national religion will not bring them any closer to the true religion. For, epistemologically, the true religion cannot be known of with certainty. But supposing that the truth was

known to the magistrate, would the application of force to dissenters and non-conformists be any more efficacious? Locke believes not.

For force to be applied efficaciously, the magistrate should be able to determine whether a dissenter or non-conformist has duly considered the national religion and when he has not. This he has not the ability to do (2.74, 78,, 3.337-338, 373, 377). The magistrate also should be able to ascertain whether outward conformity reflects inward conviction or merely fear of persecution. Again, this the magistrate cannot do (3.242, 338, 334). Furthermore, if it is the intent of the magistrate to bring all those who are ignorant, careless and negligent (2.94, 130-131) and all those who are unduly affected by vice and passion (3.392, 486), to consider the precepts of natural religion, they why is it that only those who do not conform to the national religion are persecuted and punished (2.74-75, 88, 93, 96-97, 125, 130., 3.168, 188, 225, 242, etc.). More often than not, force is appealed to only as a way of enforcing conformity; the argument that force is employed only to bring men to consider the true religion is merely a facade for the persecution of all who are not of the national religion (3.188, 197, 301, 317, 341).

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Locke's main epistemological argument rests on the assumption, which was briefly described in the first Letter, that no one can know of the true religion with certainty. He asserts once again that a magistrate is as fallible as any other man is when it comes to ascertaining the true path to salvation. Therefore, even if he were to have spiritual as well as civil authority, he would be unable to lead men to a greater good, for he himself would not know of it. His comments on the epistemological fallibility of men are much more substantive in the second and third Letters than they were

in the first one; nevertheless, the lack of detail still prevents me from judiciously ascertaining the strength of his argument.

4. A plain confession of mankind that in these things we have neither knowledge to discern, nor authority to prescribe: that men cannot by their own skill find out what is fit, or by their own power make any thing worthy to be a part of religious worship (3.157).

In matters of natural religion, God's grace alone can open the ear that it may hear, and open the heart that it may understand (2.84). But what is the implication of this for the pious Christian who, like Locke, has carefully considered religion and concluded that his indeed is the true one (2.63, 65., 3.144, 320, 326, 372, 424)? Does this mean that his beliefs are wholly unfounded? Locke does not believe that they are. He argues that a Christian's steadfast belief in the truth of his religion rests on faith and persuasion, measures which do partly justify his faith. Nevertheless, no man can be certain that his is the true religion (3.143, 145, 419). This is as true of a magistrate, as it is of a scholar or a common man.

With respect to the magistrate's ability to discern the true religion, Locke asks

(which) of the magistrates of your time did you know to have so well studied the controversies about ordination and church government, to be so well versed in church-history and succession, that you can undertake that he certainly knew, which was the ministry which our Lord had appointed, either that of Rome, or that of Sweden (3.150).

Were he to be versed in such matters, his ability to discern the true religion from the false would not be improved. In this regard, his fallibility is one shared with other men.

Can any magistrate demonstrate to himself, and if he can to himself, he does ill not to do it to others, not only all the articles of his church, but the fundamental ones of the Christian religion? For whatever is not capable of demonstration, as such remote matters of fact are not, is not, unless it be self-evident, capable to produce knowledge, how well grounded and great soever the assurance of faith may be wherewith it is received; but faith it is still, and not knowledge; persuasion and not certainty (3.144).

The true precepts of natural religion are ones which lie unbeknownst to the majority of men. This is no less true for the magistrate whose superiority in civil matters does not make him an authority on religion. His conviction that Christianity is the one true religion might be as firm or firmer than that of his subjects, but his epistemological fallibility allows him neither certainty nor knowledge, only belief and persuasion (3.144, 150, 156, 176, 194, 366, 407-10, etc.).

Men of profound erudition, who have both the ability and the opportunity to engage themselves in careful examinations of Scripture, find the task of discerning the precepts of the true religion a difficult one to resolve, such as the case with the Reynolds brothers and William Chillingworth (2.78., 3.72, 412). The Reynolds brothers, one of whom was Protestant and the other Catholic, exchanged papers on religion with one another, in the hope that a definitive conclusion as to which one of their two faiths was the true religion could be obtained. Each of them was so impressed by the strength of the other's argument, that their religious convictions underwent a dramatic change: they each adopted the other's religion.

Chillingworth's case was no different. Though he was born a Protestant, he was persuaded by the argument of a Jesuit, under the alias of John Fisher,³

to give up his religion and become Catholic, which he did. After a brief period of time spent contemplating the precepts of the Catholic religion, he decided that Protestantism reflected his conception of what the true religion should be more than Catholicism did, and so he returned to the fold. But he was not more "certain" of the truth of the Protestant religion when he returned to it than he was when he had left it.

If the precepts of the true religion neither reveal themselves to the understanding of a scholar or a magistrate, then what is the likelihood that a man of common discretion will be able to discern them? In this regard, Locke is quite pessimistic. He feels that men

of common discretion in their callings, are not able to judge when an argument is conclusive or no; much less trace it through a long train of consequences (2.196, 3.268).

Furthermore, he is convinced that such men have not the ability "to discern betwixt truth and falsehood, that depend upon long and many proofs" (2.78., 3.407). His disdain for the reason of the common man manifests itself again when he mockingly asks

Would you have every poor protestant, for example, in the Palatinate, examine thoroughly whether the pope be infallible or the head of the church; whether there be a purgatory, whether saints are to be prayed to, or the dead prayed for; whether there be no salvation out of the church without bishops; and a hundred other questions in controversy between the papists and those protestants ... (2.101., 3.310)

It is clear that if one looks towards the common man for direction in religion, he can ill provide it.

If grace alone, (2.78, 83, 84) can provide man's understanding with the means to discern true religion, then how does one go about resolving a

dispute between a Christian and a non-Christian who are equally convinced that their beliefs are truly of divine origin when grace is not to be had? Epistemologically, are the claims of the one any more certain and infallible than those of the other? In Locke's eyes, they are not:

You cannot but allow that there many lurks who sincerely seek truth, to whom yet you could never bring evidence sufficient to convince them of the truth of the Christian religion, whilst they looked on it as a principle not to be questioned, that the Koran was of divine revelation. This possibility you will tell me is prejudice and so it is; but yet if this man shall tell you it is no more a prejudice in him, than it is a prejudice in any one amongst Christians, who having not examined it, lays it down as an unquestionable principle of his religion, that the Scripture is the Word of God; what will you answer to him (3.298).

From an epistemological perspective, the beliefs and the faith of the Turk may be as well founded as the ones held by the Christians:

though some one religion be the true religion yet no man can have any more reason than another man of another religion may have to believe his to be the true religion: which makes all religions equally certain, (or uncertain, whether I please) and so renders it vain and idle to inquire after the true religion, and only a piece of good luck if any man be of it; and such good luck as he can never know that he has, till he come into the other world (3.418-419).

Locke has shown that no man is capable of discerning with certainty the true religion. This makes the illegitimacy of the magistrate's claim, that his path necessarily brings all who follow it to salvation, quite apparent. Therefore, if he knows not the true path, then he should not argue that it serves the best interest of all true believers to follow him, whether they do so voluntarily or not. Such an argument is clearly without warrant or epistemological justification.

5. In the second and third Letters, Locke tacitly concedes that his political argument is a weak one. Consequently, he relies primarily on his epistemological reflections to underpin his defence of toleration. He argues that since man's understanding is fallible, without the aid of grace, no one can have certain knowledge of the true religion: one's assurance rests on belief and persuasion. From this he concludes that even if a magistrate were to have authority in the spiritual and political realm, his own epistemological fallibility would not allow him to discern the true path to salvation more clearly than any of his subjects could, be they opposed to his convictions or not. Therefore, he serves not the greater good of dissenters and non-conformists by forcing them to conform: his path may lead them further away from salvation rather than closer to it. Although the inefficacy of his political argument has not enabled him to knock over the political pillar of intolerance, his assurance in the efficacy of his epistemological argument has provided him with a viable weapon to wield against the other pillar. This is no less apparent in the latter two Letters than it was in the first one.

In the Letters, Locke does not elaborate on the epistemological considerations which underpin his defence of toleration. Questions such as what discerns belief from knowledge, or persuasion from certainty are neither answered fully nor elaborated on at length. If one's intent is to ascertain the efficacy of Locke's epistemological arguments in the Letters, a careful analysis of them will not provide one with sufficient material to pass judgement. In this regard, the Essay, where Locke posits his epistemological system in a detailed and elaborate manner can be of aid.

An indirect way of obtaining a more complete understanding of Locke's epistemological considerations, particularly his thoughts on certainty, is to situate him with a stream of intellectual thought and examine the works of scholars who have concerned themselves with similar epistemological problems. This is the main purpose of the second chapter.

Chapter I: Footnotes

1. I have decided to examine Locke's first three Letters and not the fourth one, which was never finished, because I am not certain that it would offer one a complete understanding of what Locke would have said, had he been able to finish it.
2. Van Leeuwenn, 1963: p. 16.
3. Whereas the debate about the origin of political society and the magistrate's civil but not spiritual authority is of central importance to the first Letter and in part in the second one as well, it is given but cursory attention in the long and repetitious third Letter. His state of nature argument is mentioned only five times in the entire Letter (3.212, 216, 222-224, 503-504). On the other hand, Locke does treat the issue of epistemological certainty in two passages of moderate length in the third Letter (3.142-157, 398-428).

Chapter 2: On Certainty

I. The Historical Background

Jean Calvin (1509-1564), one of the most ardent defenders of French Protestantism, argued that man's corrupt nature made his reason wholly forlorn without divine inspiration (Popkin, 1979). St. Thomas Aquinas (1224-1274), the medieval philosopher and theologian had asserted that although man's nature was corrupt, God had afforded to his reason the ability to discern the rules of conduct necessary to direct his daily concerns (1974); and Richard Hooker, The Elizabethan defender of Anglicanism, in the Laws of Ecclesiastical Polity (1594)¹, underpinned his attack on the Puritans by making a similar assertion.

When Locke himself considers the extent of human knowledge and the capacity of the understanding to reason, his reflections reveal their Thomistic and Hookerian roots:

Though the Comprehension of our understandings, comes exceeding short of the vast Extent of Things; yet we shall have Cause enough to magnify the bountiful Author of our Being, for that Portion and Degree of Knowledge, he has bestowed on us, so far above all the rest of the Inhabitants of this our Mansion, Men have Reason to be well satisfied with what God hath thought fit for them, since he has given them...Whatsoever is necessary for the Conveniences of Life and Information of Vertue and has put within the reach of their Discovery the comfortable Provision for this Life and the Way that leads to a better. How short soever their Knowledge may come of an universal, or perfect Comprehension of whatsoever is, it yet secures their great Concernments, that they have Light enough to lead them to Knowledge of their Maker, and the sight of their own Duties (1.15).²

Were men to apply themselves, knowledge of God and of the duties and obligations owed to him could be discerned. But men should not seek absolute

certainty where only lesser measures of it are obtainable.

And we shall then use our Understandings right, when we entertain all Objects in that Way and Proportion, that they are suited to our Faculties; and upon those Grounds, they are capable of being propos'd to us; and not peremptorily, or intemperately require Demonstration, and demand Certainty where Probability only is to be had, and which is sufficient to govern all our Concernments. If we will disbelieve every thing, because we cannot certainly know all things; we shall do so much-wisely as he, who would not use his Legs, but sit still and perish, because he had no Wings to fly
(1.1.5)³

When Locke comes to consider the precise grounds upon which moral certainty rests, he is of two minds: his rational conventionalism is opposed to his rational theism, and this results in an epistemological conflict in the Essay when he attempts to determine whether moral principles can be demonstrably evident.

Debates concerning the universal or conventional origins of ideas can be found in the works of John Duns Scotus (1265/1266-1308) and William of Ockham (1285-1349) two medieval logicians and philosophers; or if one wants to go further back, in the considerations of Plato (428?-347BC) and Aristotle (384-322B.C.), the Greek founders of two main streams in philosophy. For our purposes, and following the lead of Richard Popkin in The History of Scepticism From Erasmus to Spinoza (1979), we will only go back to the Reformation rule of faith controversies to trace the influence on Locke's reflections on certainty (1975).

Martin Luther (1483-1546) a German theologian and leader of the Protestant Reformation, had virulently attacked the Pope on the question of his theological infallibility. Epistem-

ologically, his accusation implied that neither the Pope nor any other Christian could certainly know of the true religion, without divine illumination: there was no longer a temporal infallible authority in such matters. In this regard, the Calvinists were of the same mind as the Lutherans: all Christians were forlorn without divine "inspiration".

To Pyrrhonian sceptics, the declaration of human fallibility was taken to an extreme end: they argued that man's understanding could obtain no positive knowledge at all. Petrus Gassendi (1592-1665) and Marin Mersenne (1588-1648), two French theologians, were part of a group of academicians, "constructive sceptics", who acknowledged the understanding's fallibility, but they did not believe that this vitiated the possibility of obtaining a modicum of knowledge in a number of epistemological areas, particularly mathematics (Popkin, 1979). Their own scepticism was of a "mitigated" or more moderated sort, and what underpinned their arguments was a belief in the doctrine of reasonableness, to accommodate one's demands for proof to the type of evidence that can be obtained, and not to seek absolute certainty where only a lesser measure of it is to be had.

The epistemological and moral reflections of Hooker (1927)⁴, Chillingworth (1820) and Tillotson (1976) were all underpinned by "constructively" sceptical premises. But unfortunately, intrinsic to the reasonable pillars of their arguments were implications of a "subjectivist" sort: there was no certain way to ascertain which set of moral beliefs was the truest reflection of God's own principles: the doctrine of reasonableness accorded to the beliefs of the Calvinist as much /

epistemological support as it did the beliefs of the Catholic or the Presbyterian. Neither Chillingworth nor Tillotson posited a manner in which to escape this "subjectivist" impasse.

One possible implication of this epistemological difficulty is that knowledge of absolute principles becomes almost inattainable, and this may lead to doubt concerning their very existence.

This implication is not without consequence for Locke's own epistemological reflections on moral certainty. He, like his fellow Latitudinarians argued that true moral principles were theistically underpinned, but knowledge of them may be difficult to obtain. On the other hand, the "subjectivist" disparity between the moral systems of disparate cultures or societies led him to assert that this might be a manifestation of their conventional and therefore naturally disparate roots. But this problem will be considered at length in the third chapter. The second chapter recovers the historical meaning of Locke's reflections on certainty by examining the works of fellow English scholars who themselves gave careful thought to the matter.

II. From Luther to Hooker

1. Central to the rule of faith controversy was Martin Luther's denial of papal infallibility, and his assertion that each Christian has the power to discern right from wrong and to interpret scripture through the inspiration of God (Popkin, 1979: p. 2). No less adamant in his denial of papal authority was Jean Calvin, who argued that the sole criterion for

determining what the will of God was, was inner persuasion and the personal examination of scripture (Popkin, 1979: p. 9). But if inner persuasion was to be the main criterion upon which certainty was to be founded, potentially there could be as many claims of revelation as there are individuals.

Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536), the great Renaissance humanist, scholar and counter-reformer, worried about the schismatic implications of Luther's beliefs. While he admitted that matters of natural religion were complex and that the Pope was not an infallible guide to such matters, neither were individual Christians. Therefore, if for no other reason than long-standing tradition, the Church's interpretation should be accepted (Popkin, 1979: p. 6).

Sebastian Castellio (1515-1563) the Protestant humanist and Biblical scholar from Basel, in a large part agreed with Erasmus: "in religion, there are a great many things that are too obscure, too many passages in Scripture too opaque for anyone to be absolutely certain of the truth" (Popkin, 1979: p. 10). But quite unlike Luther, Calvin and Erasmus, who deny the efficacy of reason unaided by revelation, be it that of the Pope or of the common man, Castellio argued there were clearly a number of religious principles which no reasonable men could doubt: that God existed, that God was good, that scriptures provided one with the revealed words of God (Popkin, 1979: p. 11).

The belief that there were principles discernable to man's reason came to be of key importance to the theological considerations of the constructive sceptics and the English Latitudinarians of the 17th century.

What makes these epistemological debates intriguing is that Luther, Calvin, Erasmus and Castellio all employ sceptical premises to underpin their respective arguments. This notwithstanding, the conclusions derived from these premises are wholly opposed to one another. Luther and Calvin disclaim the authority of the hierarchial and physical church and proclaim the power of each Christian as a true believer. Erasmus asserts that the complexity of religion precludes one from attaining certain knowledge of its precepts, but nevertheless tradition indicates that one's faith in the Church is well founded. To Castellio, the fallibility of all parties in religious matters means that all Christians should be united in their search for reasonable principles most evident to man's understanding.

2. The doctrine of reasonableness came to be adopted by the advocates of "mitigated" or "constructive" scepticism, Mersenne, Gassendi and Chillingworth early in the 17th century (Popkin, 1979). It afforded them a safe passage or a "via media" between the two rigid extremes that were placing unduly narrow restrictions on epistemological discussions: the pyrrhonian sceptics, who argued that nothing was certain, and the dogmatists, who asserted that their interpretation, and their's alone was the true one. For example, Mersenne wanted to establish

that even if the claims of the sceptics could not be refuted, nonetheless we could have a type of knowledge which is not open to question, and which is all that is requisite for our purposes in life (Popkin, 1979: p. 131).

What underpinned the philosophical considerations of all the constructive sceptics was the belief that man's inability to obtain knowledge of an indubitable character did not prevent him from obtaining knowledge of a more moderate sort: knowledge sufficient for our purposes in life.

Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) a leading Dutch statesman, scholar and jurist, published a tract entitled The Truth of the Christian Religion in 1624. In it he reintroduces the Aristotelian hierarchy of assent to continental academic circles. He argues that

different things must have different kinds of proof; one sort in mathematics, another in the properties of bodies, another in doubtful matters, and another in matters of fact (Grotius, 1823: II, 19).

Van Leeuwenn asserts that this hierarchy of assent was taken up by Chillingworth, and other English men of some eminence such as Joseph Glanvil (1636-1680) and John Wilkins (1614-1672), two well-known Royal Scientists (1963).

3. Curiously enough, Richard Hooker brings forth an argument of much the same character as Grotius', but thirty years earlier.

The truth is, that the mind of man desireth ever more to know the truth according to the most infallible certainty which the nature of things can yield. The greatest assurance generally with all men is that which we have by plain aspect and intuitive beholding. Where we cannot attain unto this, there what appeareth to be strong and invincible demonstration, such as wherein it is not by any way possible to be deceived, thereunto the mind doth necessarily assent, neither is it in the choice thereof to do otherwise. And in case these both do fail, then which way greatest probability leadeth, thither the mind doth evermore incline (2.7.5).

By failing to consider seriously the influence of Hooker, Popkin (1979)

and Van Leeuwn (1963) risk painting an inaccurate picture of English scepticism. Van Leeuwn recognizes Chillingworth's (1820) dependence on Hooker's (1927) concept of demonstrability (1963: p. 21), but he belittles its significance and ignores mentioning the five other direct references to Hooker that Chillingworth makes in his text.⁵ Popkin admits that Pyrrhonian themes were debated at Oxford in the late 16th and early 17th century, but he makes no reference to the possibility of Hooker having been a part of such discussions (1979: p. 66). Hooker was a member in good standing at Corpus Christie College, having been admitted as an undergraduate in 1568, receiving his B.A. in 1573, his M.A. in 1577, and becoming a full fellow of his college in 1579. It would not at all be surprising were it found that Hooker had been a part of, or at least had known of, the debates on pyrrhonian scepticism. Although the thrust of his attack is directed towards the Puritans, who like the Pyrrhonians, believed in the inefficacy of reason, his epistemological argument is as effective against the one as it is against the other. He admits to the fallibility of reason, yet he asserts that a modicum of knowledge may be obtained if man moderates his demands:

in all things then are our consciences best resolved,
and in a most agreeable sort unto God and nature
settled, when they are so far persuaded as those
grounds of persuasion which are to be had will bear
(2.7.5).

Of some moment is the fact that these reflections predate those of Grotius and Mersenne.

Unfortunately, Popkin argues that Mersenne's La Verité des Sciences, contre les Septiques ou Pyrrhoniens (1628) was one of the earliest, and one of the most influential, attempts to develop a systematic theory of

a "mitigated" type of scepticism (1979: p. 129). When this statement is complimented by Van Leeuween's (1963) assertion that Grotius's Aristotelianism was of major importance as well, then it becomes clear that the origin of "constructive" scepticism, in their eyes, lies in the works of the continental philosophers of the 1620's. Hooker's role, at least with respect to English "constructive" scepticism is wholly neglected.

I do not deny that the influence of the continental "constructive" sceptics on their English counterparts was significant, I only wish to point out that a number of epistemological reflections posited by the English Latitudinarians are similar in tenor to those proffered by Hooker. Locke's (1975) and Chillingworth's (1820) citation of Hooker make it evident that not only were they familiar with his work, but they considered his philosophical reflections to be of value to their own consideration on politics and epistemology. Furthermore, although there is no explicit reference to Hooker's hierarchy of assent, the coincidence of Locke's, Chillingworth's and Tillotson's own hierarchies,^{to} the one posited by Hooker make it quite unlikely that it is due to chance alone.

III. Richard Hooker⁶

1. Hooker argued that all objects have an end to which they are directed by laws:

That which doth assign unto each thing the kind, that which doth moderate the force and power, that which doth appoint the form and measure, the same we term a Law. So that no certain end could ever be attained, unless the actions whereby it is attained were regular; that is to say made suitable, fit and correspondent unto their end, by some canon, rule or law (1927: 1.2.1).

The laws which direct objects to their ends are manifestations of the lex aeterna which is God's eternal law (Hooker, 1927: 1.3.1). Of the laws which partake in the divine reason, there are five others besides the eternal law: natural, celestial, rational or of reason, divine and human.

Nature's law directs natural agents who "keep the law of their kind unwittingly, as the heavens and the elements of the world, which can do not otherwise than they do" (Hooker, 1927: 1.3.2). Unlike rational agents who act out of their own volition, natural objects act out of necessity. The celestial law pertains only to Angels: it is that which pushes them to strive

to resemble him (God) in goodness (and which) maketh them unweariable and even unsatiable in their longing to do by all means all manner good unto all the creatures of God (Hooker, 1927: 1.4.1).

Man's corruption does not allow him to devote himself to the search for God and his goodness with the vigour and perseverance that the Angels have. Nevertheless, the rational law provides him with a sufficient indication of what it is that he should do: "men by discourse of natural Reason have rightly found out themselves to be all for ever bound unto their actions" (1.8.8). The divine law is that which binds men together without their knowledge: it can only be revealed to him by divine inspiration. Finally, the human law

is the very soul of politic body, the parts whereof are by law animated, held together, and set on work in such actions, as the common good requireth (Hooker, 1927: 1.10.1).

2. To return to the rational law, Hooker asserts that it is "the rule of voluntary agents on earth (and) is the sentence that reason giveth

concerning the goodness of those things which they are to do" (1927:

1.8.4). Furthermore,

the main principles of Reason are in themselves apparent. For to make nothing evident of itself unto man's understanding were to take away all possibility of knowing anything (Hooker, 1927: 1.8.5).

The soul may have a natural inclination and desire to attain its end, knowledge of God's perfection and his goodness, but it is at first without any such understanding or knowledge at all (Hooker, 1927: 1.6.1).

Man's soul is like a book, "wherein nothing is, and yet all things may be imprinted" (Hooker, 1927: 1.6.1). Out of this "utter vacuity" man's understanding and his knowledge develop incrementally, until it attains the stature of the Angels themselves (Hooker, 1927: 1.6.1).

As to the means in which this accomplished, Hooker argues that education and instruction

the one by use, the other by precept, make our natural faculty of reason both the better and the sooner able to judge rightly between truth and error, good and evil (1927: 1.6.5).

Hooker believed that man's ability to reason critically allows him to determine generally what he ought and ought not to do. But this notwithstanding, man's ability to reason critically reaches not into complex matters, and in this regard the authority of the church should be sought out and listened to:

Easier a great deal for men by law to be taught what they ought to do, than instructed how to judge as they should do of law: the one being a thing which belongeth generally unto all, the other such as none but the wiser and more judicious sort can perform (Hooker, 1927: 1.16.2).

To understand Hooker's deference to authority, one must recall that he himself was engaged in a rule of faith controversy with the Puritans, whose devotion to "inspiration" as the criterion of faith posed grave difficulties for the defenders of the Elizabethan church. While Hooker argued that individuals could well understand a number of natural principles of religion, for him to admit that all such matters could be revealed to the individual either through reason or inspiration, would be to concede that a hierarchical church was not necessary; and this in turn would undermine the foundations of the Elizabethan church. Nevertheless, he did provide the common man with several ways of discerning the precepts of natural religion, principally, of ascertaining what the good is.

3. Goodness can be discerned in one of two ways: either by knowing the causes whereby it is made such, or by observing the signs and tokens which annex themselves to goodness wherever it manifests itself though the cause be not known (Hooker, 1927: 1.8.2). The former is an infallible guide, but unfortunately, man's reason is fallible and this leaves him with little choice in the matter: he must content himself with discerning the signs and tokens annexed to goodness, some of which are more certain, others less so (Hooker, 1927: 1.8.3). Of these signs and tokens there are three measures, plain aspect and intuitive beholding, demonstration, and probability or moderate assurance.

In every kind of knowledge some such grounds there are, as that being proposed the mind doth presently embrace them as free from all possibility of error, clear and manifest without proof. In which kind axioms and principles more general are such as this, "that the greater good is to be chosen before the less" (Hooker, 1927: 1.8.5).

Axioms and principles of this sort are embraced by man's understanding because they are evident by "plain aspect" and "intuitive beholding" (Hooker, 1927: 2.7.5), but when the general and perpetual voice of men pronounce that such principles are free from error and manifest without proof, no greater certitude is obtainable, revelation notwithstanding, (1927: 1.11.3). To Hooker

The general and perpetual voice of men is as the sentence of God himself. For that which all men have at all times learned, Nature herself must needs have taught; and God being the author of Nature, her voice is but his instrument (1927: 1.8.3).

In those instances where neither the spontaneity of assent nor the conviction of the general voice of mankind is to be had,

there what appeareth to be true by strong and invincible demonstration, such as wherein it is not possible to be deceived, thereunto the mind doth necessarily assent, neither is it in the choice to do otherwise (Hooker, 1927: 2.7.5).

Although Hooker does not elaborate on his notion of demonstrability, given the scholastic tenor of his studies at Corpus Christi, one might suppose that he was referring to a syllogistic type of reasoning: whereby if one reasons validly the conclusion will be seen to follow necessarily from the premises. But without greater textual support, this definition of demonstrability can only be a speculative and tentative one.

Hooker provides a further measure of certainty, "which way greatest probability leadeth", a measure whose certainty is clearly subordinate to either of the previously mentioned ones (1927: 27.5). Propositions such

as "men have their souls rather by creation than propogation", or "that the mother of our Lord has always lived in a state of virginity as well after his birth as before" are ones which are probable and not unlikely to be true, even though there is a measure of doubt in one's considerations on the matter (Hooker, 1927: 2.7.5). Again, Hooker's failure to elaborate on "probable" certainty makes it difficult for one to determine precisely what he means. It can only be assumed that propositions such as the one's cited above are not unlikely to be true because they are the pillars of faith. However, when faith conflicts with reason, as it does when it is claimed that a woman who gives birth to a child is still a virgin, a measure of doubt does manifest itself, thereby making such propositions probable but not certain (Hooker, 1927: 2.7.5).

4. Hooker argues that

in all things then are our consciences best resolved,
and in a most agreeable sort unto God and nature
settled, when they are so far persuaded as those grounds
of persuasion which are to be had will bear (Hooker,
1927: 2.7.5).

This notwithstanding, his belief in the natural law and his faith in the efficacy of human reason, fallible as it is, leads him to assert that there are axioms and principles which are universally valid and can be known as such when there is general agreement on the matter. Little thought is given to the possibility that the number of generally accepted principles is rather small, and that even principles that do enjoy widespread acceptance are vague and ambiguous in their application. Is there common agreement as to what constitutes the "good" in the axiom that "the greater good is to be chosen before the less"? Hooker's response would be that there is common agreement: that that which leads

to man's eternal happiness can be defined as the good. To this one could reply that the Elizabethan and Calvinist churches might be in agreement as to the validity of this axiom, but there is much disaccord as to the manner in which one is to pursue and choose the good that leads to salvation. This challenge is not dealt with by Hooker.

Hooker offers few detailed comments on the measures of certainty that his Aristotelian hierarchy of assent outlines. Nevertheless, when Chillingworth and Tillotson construct their own hierarchies, the similarities to Hooker's framework becomes quite apparent.

IV. William Chillingworth

1. As we have seen, when it came to the problem of applying the law of nature to specific questions, he (Hooker) distrusted public and open criticism, preferring to leave the ratiocination involved to the 'wiser and more judicious sort' (Orr, 1967: p. 181).

William Chillingworth, whose indebtedness to Hooker and therefore to Aquinas as well, is evident by the number of acknowledgements to him within The Religion of the Protestants, A Safe Way to Salvation, which was published in 1638 at Oxford (1820), was quite apart from him on the issue of authority⁷. His own rule of faith controversy was not with the Puritans, but with the Roman church, which would not accept its fallibility in religious matters. Like Hooker, and Castello before him, Chillingworth believed that in a number of instances, a reasonable measure of certainty concerning the precepts of natural religion could be obtained. For this to occur the critical rational faculty of individual Christians would have to be applied to an assiduous examination of the precepts constitutive of their religion: if such judgements were left to an authority such as the

Roman Church, it is quite likely that its considerations would be blinded by long standing tradition and the rhetoric of its own dogma (Orr, 1967: p. 180).

Unfortunately, the extreme dependence on individual judgement that comprises a major part of Chillingworth's argument leads to a morass of "subjectivism", and this is a problem with grave implications:

As with Hooker before him, and Locke after him, his (Chillingworth's) defence of human reason operated within a wholehearted acceptance of Christianity. This point can hardly be overemphasized, since it provides a clue to the difficulties in which he found himself when he tried to reconcile belief in individual judgement with the conviction that there do exist some fundamental doctrines (Orr, 1967: p. 72).

The "via media" between the dogmatism of the Roman Church and the scepticism of the Puritans is a difficult passage to navigate. On the one hand, Chillingworth realizes that absolute certainty in religious matters is unobtainable; on the other hand, it is apparent that lesser measures of certainty attained by an individual's judgement can provide with the criteria whereby the most extreme of sectarian positions can be substantiated. This notwithstanding, Chillingworth feels that his "reasonable" argument can somehow steer clear of these problems.

Chillingworth asks of those who "exact a certainty of faith above that of sense or science" (1820: 1.8) and who argue "that heavenly things cannot be seen to any purpose by the mid-day light" (1.8), whether their demands be reasonable or excessively exigent? To demand of man or a church that which a man or a church cannot do, and to be satisfied with nothing else that measures not up to absolute certainty, is to leave all Christians in a forlorn state. Will the Lord not be satisfied "if we receive any degree of light which makes us leave the works of darkness, and walk as children of

the light?" (1820: 1.8). If indeed the Lord finds this to be satisfactory, then all men, be they Romans or others, should forego their claims to infallibility, admit to their limitations, and strive after truth and goodness as best they can.

With respect to the precepts of natural religion, Chillingworth asserts that they "cannot ordinarily have any rational and acquired certainty, more than moral", (1820: 1.8) which is the lowest of three measures of certainty: the two higher measures are absolutely infallible certainty or metaphysical certainty. The first, absolutely infallible certainty is unattainable by man and inheres only in the mind of God (Van Leeuween, 1963: p. 22). The second measure, metaphysical certainty is obtained either from sense, demonstration, or revelation (Wharton MSS f.87., Orr, 1967: p. 51).

Moral certainty is neither absolute, nor is it derived from sense, demonstration, of the metaphysical sort, or revelation. It

is begott in us, by presumption and probabilities, which either by their strength...or by their multitude, make up a moral demonstration, to which being well considered... no prudent and sober man can possibly refuse to yield to a firm, certain, undoubting reasonable assent and adherence (Orr, 1567: p. 51).

Chillingworth makes use of Hooker's conception of demonstration, but he chooses to apply it in two distinct manners: with respect to metaphysical certainty, and moral certainty. Since Chillingworth affords to metaphysical certainty or demonstrability a high measure of assent, it can be assumed that it is invincible and strong in the same way that Hooker's concept of demonstrability was seen to be. Although the pillars of moral certainty or demonstrability are presumptions and probability, which clearly do not provide one with the invincibility and strength which underpins a demonstration of the metaphysical sort, the certainty it does offer is sufficient enough to manage one's moral affairs.

But if one wants to ascertain which set of moral beliefs have the greatest measure of moral certainty, the criterion of presumption and probability afford one no solution: the beliefs of the Calvinist epistemologically, are of equal certainty as those of the Catholic or Presbyterian. In the place of Christian unity and common acceptance of reasonable general principles, which were Chillingworth's goals in positing the concept of moral certainty, schism and subjectivism are the results.

V. John Tillotson

1. One of Tillotson's most renowned sermons was "The Wisdom of Being Religious", which was preached at St. Paul's in March 1663 and was published in 1664 (1976). In it he addresses the issue of the ability of human understanding to grasp the knowledge which inheres in God and to know of the duties and obligations that are owed to him. His initial considerations on the subject are discernably Thomistic, and in this regard, they are similar to the ones which one finds in Hooker, and which underpin Locke's Workmanship model as well.

(A) perfect knowledge of Nature is no where to be found but in the Author of it; no less wisdom and understanding that that which made the world and contrived this vast and regular frame of Nature can thoroughly understand the Philosophy of it and comprehend so vast a design (Tillotson, 1976: p. 363).

This notwithstanding

there is a knowledge which is very proper to man and lies level to humane understanding, and that is the knowledge of our Creator and of the duty we owe to him (Tillotson, 1976: p. 363).

To know of one's duties, one must first ascertain "the ways and means God hath made known these duties to us, and the goodness and the obligation of them" (Tillotson, 1820: p. 281).

Tillotson presents a list of five ways that God hath discovered them to us: 1) by a kind of natural instinct, 2) by natural reason, 3) by the general vote and consent of mankind, 4) by external revelation, and 5) by the inward dictates of motions of God's spirit upon the minds of men (Tillotson, 1820: p. 281). Since my primary interest in this chapter is determining the limits of man's natural reason in discerning moral principles, I will only examine the first three ways.

Tillotson's first way reflects the innate character of natural instinct, and it reveals the influence that his Cambridge mentors, Ralph Cudworth (1616-1688), Henry More (1616-1687), and Benjamin Whichcote (1609-1683) must have exerted upon him, and this sets him quite apart from Hooker's (1927) and Locke's (1978) considerations on the subject.

(T)his I call natural instinct, because it does not seem to proceed to much from the exercise of our reason, as from a natural propension and inclination, like those instincts which are in brute creatures of natural affection and care towards their young ones (Tillotson, 1820: p. 282).

This is made evident to Tillotson because

we see plainly that the young and the ignorant have as strong impressions of piety and devotion, as true a sense of gratitude and justice and pity, as the wiser and more knowing part of mankind. . . And although this do not equally extent to all the instances of our duty, yet as to the great lines and essential parts of it, mankind hardly need to consult any other oracle than the mere propensions and inclinations of their nature (Tillotson, 1820 : p. 282).

Inate tendencies aside, man's natural reason reveals to him two other ways of determining what is the good, and what his duties and obligations are in that regard.

First,

reason shews us the conveniences of things to our nature: and whatever is agreeable to the primitive design and intention of nature, that we call good; whatever is contrary thereto, we call evil (Tillotson, 1820: pp. 284-285).

When reason determines that an action can benefit it in its search for truth, one must act in accordance with its dictates. For example,

(I)t is agreeable also to nature to be just, and to do to others as we would have them do unto us; for this is to make our own natural inclinations and desires the rule of dealing with others, and to be merciful. . . (Tillotson, 1820: p. 285).

Such are the duties that reason reveals to man when he carefully considers which precepts are constitutive of natural religion.

Secondly,

Reason shews us the tendency of these things to our happiness and interest. And, indeed, the notion of Good and Evil commonly refer to the consequences of things; and we call that good, which will bring some benefit and advantage to us, and that evil, which is likely to produce some mischief and inconvenience (Tillotson, 1820: p. 285).

Simply put, what is good, and what is evil, is determined by whether the object of one's considerations tends to bring one closer to God or lead one away from him (Tillotson, 1820: pp. 285-287).

The third way that "God hath shown us what is good (is) by the general vote and consent of mankind", (Tillotson, 1820: p. 287).

And this is an argument of great force; there being no better way to prove any thing to be natural to any kind of being, than if it be generally found in the whole kind. Omnium consensus naturae vox est, "the consent of all is the voice of nature", saith Tully. And indeed, by what other argument can we prove that reason and speech, and an inclination to society are natural to men; but that these

belong to the whole kind (Tillotson, 1820: p. 453).

General consent had provided Hooker with an effective method of determining what was of God's will and what was not. It might have proven to be just as effective a tool to Chillingworth had he chosen to employ it; he did not and as we have seen his reliance on individuality led him to posit a "subjectivistically" oriented epistemology. If general consent can afford to Tillotson the measure of certainty that it did to Hooker, then perhaps the epistemological difficulties encountered by Chillingworth can be avoided.

Tillotson addresses the problem of certainty when he defends his belief in the existence of God against the sceptical accusations of the atheists: they argue that

the universal consent of mankind in the apprehension of a God is no more an Argument that He really is, than the general agreement of so many Nations for so many Ages in the worship of many Gods is an Argument that there are many (1976: p. 392).

In response, Tillotson offers three replies.

1. That the generality of the Philosophers and wise men of all Nations and Ages, did dissent from the multitude in these things. They believed but one Supreme Deity, which with respect to the various benefits men received from him had several titles bestowed upon him. And although they did servilely comply with the people in worshipping God, by sensible images and representations, yet it appears by their writings that they despised this way of worship as superstitious and unsuitable to the nature of God...

2. The gross ignorance and mistakes of the Heathen about God and his worship are a good argument that there is a God; because they shew that men sunk into the most degenerate conditions; into the greatest blindness and darkness imaginable, do yet retain some sense and awe of a Deity...

3. That there have been so many false Gods deysid, is rather an argument that there is a true one than that there is none. There would be no counterfeits but for the sake of something that is real...(1976: p. 393).

Although these measures of assurance are not absolute, they afford one as much assurance of God's existence as may be had without revelation.

To Tillotson, what makes speculative atheism absurd is that

it requires more evidence for things than they are capable of, Aristotle hath long since well observed, how unreasonable it is to expect the same kind of proof and evidence for every thing, which we have for some things (1976: p. 393).

Were men to be reasonable and not seek absolute certainty where only lesser measures are to be had, then the destructive arguments of the atheists, with respect to the existence of God, or of the sceptics, on other epistemological matters, would not pose as great a threat to their beliefs:

That when any thing in any of these kinds, is proved by as good Arguments as a thing of that kind is capable of, and we have as great assurance that it is as we could possibly have supposing it were, we ought not in reason to make any doubt of the existence of that thing,
(Tillotson, 1976: p. 394).

2. Like Hooker and Chillingworth before him, Tillotson deals with the problem of certainty by constructing an Aristotelian hierarchy of assent whereby measures of certainty are ranked:

Mathematical things, being of an abstracted nature are capable of the clearest and strictest Demonstration: But Conclusions in Natural Philosophy are capable of proof by an Induction of experiments: things of a moral nature by moral arguments; and matters of fact by credible testimony. And though none of these be capable of that strict kind of demonstration, which Mathematical matters

are; yet we have an undoubted assurance of them, when they are proved by the best arguments that things of that kind will bear (1976: p. 394).

The two highest measures of certainty on his scale are provided by mathematical demonstration and by sensation. With respect to the existence of God, it

is not Mathematically demonstrable, nor can it be expected it should, because only Mathematical matters admit of this kind of evidence. Nor can it be proved immediately by sense, because God being supposed to be a pure spirit cannot be the object of any corporeal sense. But yet we have as great assurance that there is a God as the nature of the thing to be proved is capable of; and as we could in reason expect to have supposing he were (Tillotson, 1976: p. 394).

If moral assurance is sufficient enough to ensure one of the being of God, as it would seem to be, since his existence is not known of through demonstration or sensation, it affords no less insurance in moral matters themselves:

We have as much as is abundantly sufficient to justify every man's discretion, who for the great and eternal things of another world hazards or parts with the poor and transitory things of this life. And for the clearing of this it will be worth our considering, that the greatest affairs of the world, and the most important concerns of this life are all conducted only by moral demonstrations (Tillotson, 1976: p. 408).

Following Chillingworth's lead, Tillotson applies the term demonstrability to two distinct measures of assurance, a mathematical and a moral one. But unlike a mathematical demonstration which is based on strict reasoning and precise rules of inference, moral demonstrability is founded on presumption and probability: a man may not be absolutely certain that his baker, brewer or cook has not poisoned him, but unless he has reason

to believe otherwise, he may proceed on the assumption that it has not been (Tillotson, 1976: p. 408). Assumptions of this sort are what provide reasonable men with a measure of assurance, sufficient enough for them to regulate their daily concerns. Furthermore, the criterion of presumption and probability allows them to ascertain what the proper rules of moral conduct are.

The question which once again has to be addressed is whether certainty of the moral kind, being founded on presumption and probability, can help one to discern absolute rules of moral conduct. Tillotson's definition of moral certainty, like Chillingworth's, affords to all Christian sects an equal measure of epistemological support: each sect perceives its own beliefs as being the most viable. Tillotson's epistemology does not provide one with a way to break the deadlock. One possible implication of this is that knowledge of absolute principles becomes unobtainable, which in turn may lead to one's questioning the very existence of such principles.

This implication is of some moment to Locke, for although he tries founding morality on rationally theistic principles, he acknowledges that certain knowledge of these principles perhaps are not within man's reach (1975: Book IV). But concurrently, the disparity between the moral beliefs of disparate cultures or societies leads him to posit that these beliefs could reflect their conventional origin (1975: Book III).

Although neither Hooker nor the Latitudinarians argued explicitly that the roots of morality were conventional, intrinsic to their arguments are conventional implications, ones which perhaps Locke drew upon, and puzzled over, when he was writing the Essay.

Footnotes: Chapter 2

1. When Hooker's Laws are cited, references will be made to the book, chapter and section.
2. What allows man to attain knowledge of his duties and obligations is the Workmanship model whose usage will be discussed in chapter 3. For a detailed analysis of the Workmanship model, see Tully, 1980a.
3. Compare Aristotle, 1962: 1084b and Aquinas, 1953: ST I-II, 96, 1.
4. All references to Hooker's Laws will be to the book, chapter and section and these alone will ~~be~~ placed in brackets.
5. The five references to Hooker in Chillingworth's Religion are 2.30-32, 85-86; 4.49; 5.109-110, Orr, 1967: p. 72.
6. Hooker's Laws are discernably Thomistic, Munz, 1952, treats Hooker's relation ~~to~~ Aquinas at length.
7. All references to Chillingworth's Religion are to the chapter and section, and these will be placed in brackets.

Chapter 3: The Essay Concerning Human Understanding

I. Background to the Third Chapter

The first chapter revealed that Locke's defence of toleration rested on two pillars, one of them political, the other epistemological. With respect to the first, Locke had argued that the magistrate had no right to intervene in religious matters, for he had never been authorized to do so by those who had established the commonwealth upon their leaving the state of nature. As to the second, since it was obvious that man's fallibility precluded him from obtaining absolute certainty about the true precepts of morality and natural religion, neither the magistrate nor any one else had the right to persecute a dissenter or a non-conformist on the assumption that this would lead them to the true religion.

Proast's retort was highly critical. He asserted that Locke's political argument, being founded on an arbitrary assumption concerning men in the state of nature was a rather weak one. Furthermore, he accused Locke of having begged the question: Locke vehemently denied the charge in his second Letter, but his third Letter shifts away from a balance between a political and epistemological defence of toleration to a position founded on epistemological considerations alone. Perhaps this is Locke's tacit admission of the efficacy of Proast's argument.

The singular dependence on epistemology in the third Letter, and to a lesser extent in the second Letter, lends an inordinate amount of importance to these reflections. Unfortunately, while his argument is persuasive, it affords one little detail or elaboration on the under-

pinnings of his epistemological defence of toleration. In this regard, only the Essay can provide Locke's epistemological defence of toleration with the philosophical support that was alluded to, but not specified, in the Letters.

The second chapter traced the development of "constructive scepticism" from Luther through Hooker to Chillingworth and Tillotson. Special emphasis was given to Hooker's Laws because it was felt that his influence on English "constructive scepticism" was much more significant than either Popkin or Van Leeuwen acknowledged. Although Hooker's arguments on certainty lacked detail, the works of the two Latitudinarians, Chillingworth and Tillotson, made it evident that Hooker's reflections were as relevant to philosophical and theological debates of the seventeenth century as they had been to those in the sixteenth century.

When their considerations on morality were examined, it was observed that both Chillingworth and Tillotson shared the belief that moral assurance was founded on mitigated measures of certainty, probability and presumption. Intrinsic to these measures were implications of a rather "subjectivist" character: they afforded to all "reasonable" sets of moral principles equal measures of support. Neither Chillingworth nor Tillotson addressed themselves to these implications; Locke did, and it is out of these "subjectivist" implications that Locke derives his epistemological defence of toleration.

Locke's objectives in the Essay are modest:

I pretend not to publish this Essay for the Information of Men of large Thoughts and quick Apprehensions; to such Masters of Knowledge I profess my self a Scholar, and therefore warn them before-hand not to expect any-thing here, but what being spun out of my own course Thoughts, is fitted to Men of my own size, to whom, perhaps, it will not be unacceptable, that I have taken some Pains, to make plain and familiar to their Thoughts some Truths, which established Prejudice, or the Abstractness of the Ideas themselves, might render difficult.¹

Indeed as he admits in the Epistle to the Reader, he would be happy if he were able "to work as an Underlabourer who clears the ground a little, and removes some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge", and then to demonstrate that "Vague and insignificant Forms of Speech" and "Abuses of Language" are not mysteries of Science, but can be resolved through careful thought and consideration. To break in on this "Sanctuary of Vanity and Ignorance", he intends to develop an epistemology which is clear and simple, yet which concurrently sheds light on the complex workings of the understanding and its search for truth.

His epistemology is detailed and complicated, moving from basic reflections on what ideas are, what their sources are, what constitutes knowledge, to more complex ones concerning the epistemological status of ideas and knowledge. Having delineated the major components of Locke's epistemology, a question which arose out of the Letters, yet could not be addressed until the Essay was considered, can now be answered: what epistemological measure of assurance can one have in moral and theological matters. Much of the latter portion of this chapter will address this question directly.

II. Locke's Epistemology

1. Locke, like Hooker before him (1927: 1.6.1), believed that the mind at first is like

white paper void of all Characters, without any Ideas:
How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that
vast store which the busy and boundless Fancy of Man has
painted on it, with an almost endless variety (2.1.2)?

The answer Locke provides to this question sets him quite apart from Tillotson (1820: p. 282) and his fellow Platonists whose doctrine of innate ideas was central to their epistemology. He asserts that in experience

all our Knowledge is founded; and from that it
ultimately derives it self. Our Observation employ'd
wither about external, sensible Objects; or about
the internal Operations of our Minds, perceived and
reflected on by our selves, is that, which supplies
our Understandings with all the materials of our
thinking (2.1.2).

External sensation and internal reflections are the two "foundations of our Knowledge", and each of them will be looked at in turn.

As to the first source of ideas, Locke asserts that our senses convey unto our minds distinct perceptions of objects and the various ways that it is affected by them (2.1.3). This is how the mind comes to have ideas such as those it has of white, heat, cold, soft, hard, etc. These simple and uncompound ideas are not innate to the mind, they are garnered through experience.

A child, when he comes into the world, it totally devoid of all ideas, be they simple or complex.

He that attentatively considers the state of a Child, at his first coming into the World, will have reason to think him stored with plenty of Ideas, that are to be the matter of his future Knowledge. 'Tis by degrees he comes to be furnished with them (2.1.6).

Consequently,

Men then come to be furnished with fewer or more simple Ideas from without, according as the Objects, they converse with, afford greater or less variety (2.1.7).

By being exposed to the external world, a child gradually comes to understand the ideas that his senses provide him with. Were the child denied the opportunity to be in contact with sensitive impressions, such as those provided by "colours, sounds and other objects", his mind would remain totally blank:

if a Child were kept in a place, where he never saw any other but Black and White, till he were a Man, he would have no more Ideas of Scarlet or Green, than he that from his childhood never tasted an Oyster, or a Pine-Apple, has of those particular Relishes (2.1.6)

Sense experience is only one of two ways by which the mind is furnished with ideas.

The other Fountain, from which Experience furnisheth the Understanding with Ideas, is the Perception of the Operations of our own Minds, within us, as it is employ'd about the Ideas it has got; which Operations, when the Soul comes to reflect on, and consider, do furnish the Understanding with another set of Ideas, which could not be had from things without: and such are, Perception, Thinking, Doubting, Believing... and all the different actings of our Minds (2.1.4).

The senses are the source of one's ideas of the external world, reflection is what presents us with our ideas of the inner world: the thoughts that constitute our inner considerations. But to understand Locke's conception of knowledge, one must determine not only what the sources of

ideas are, but also, one must ascertain what ideas themselves actually are.

2. To Locke, the building blocks of all knowledge are simple ideas, ideas which enter the mind through any or all of the senses and are simple and unmixed (2.2.1). In touching a piece of wax, one feels softness and warmth; in touching a piece of ice, one feels coldness and hardness. When each of these ideas are considered, they are found to be clear and uncompounded.

(There) is nothing can be plainer to a Man, than the clear and distinct Perception he has of these simple Ideas; which being each in it self uncompounded, contains in it nothing but one uniform Appearance, or Conception in the mind, and is not distinguishable into different Ideas (2.2.1).

Once the understanding has stored these simple ideas, it is free to repeat, compare and unite them in virtually any manner that it pleases. This allows it to produce complex ideas, of which there are three sorts: modes, substances and relations.

Modes I call such complex Ideas, which however compounded, contain not in them the supposition of subsisting by themselves, but are considered as Dependences on, or Affections of Substances; such are the Ideas signified by the Words, Triangle, Gratitude, Murder, etc. (2.12.4).

Modes are artificial aggregations of simple ideas which the mind freely chooses to unite. A "dozen" is an example of a simple mode. It is a term which the understanding chooses to apply to a collection of twelve similar yet distinct objects. An idea such as "beauty" is a complex mode because it combines simple ideas of several kinds into one: "v.g. Beauty, consisting of a certain composition of Color and Figure, causing

delight in the beholder (2.12.5).

Modes, be they simple or complex, are artificial aggregations of simple ideas because the mind could have chosen to aggregate them in any manner: modes have no necessary referents in nature. Let us consider a simple mode such as a "mile", which is a measure of distance comprising 5270 feet. Prior to there being a generally accepted definition of this term, it could just as easily have been determined that a mile would comprise a distance of 2156 feet. In other words, the mind or the understanding arbitrarily picks out a number of elements, aggregates them and then applies a term to describe the aggregation: the mind or the understanding is under no compulsion to aggregate ideas in a particular way or to apply one particular term to an aggregation. The significance of this epistemological concept and Locke's usage of it will become apparent when his reflections on morality are considered.

What of substances, an epistemological question which has plagued philosophy ever since Plato and Aristotle first discussed it. Locke defines it simply:

The Ideas of Substances are such combinations of simple Ideas, as are taken to represent distinct particular things subsisting by themselves: in which the supposed, or confused Idea of Substance, such as it is, is always the first and chief (2.23.3).

The idea of substance is only "supposed" and often is "confused" because one can know, through sense experience and observation of the external world that each object such as a man, a horse, or a nugget of Gold, has a substratum, but one knows not what this substratum actually is. It can

be ascertained that a number of simple ideas coexist together in a substance, however, "it be certain, we (still) have no clear, or distinct Idea of that thing we suppose a Support" (2.23.4).

The last sort of complex ideas, is that we call Relation, which consists in the considerations and comparing One Idea with another (2.12.7).

The definition of a concept such as relation would seem to be rather self-evident, and it is: it relates ideas to one another. Although its definition is simple, its application is not, and it is around this concept and that of a mode, that many of the epistemological difficulties on morality centre.

3. Locke asserts that simple ideas are adequate copies of that which the senses introduce to the understanding:

the Sensation of White, in my Mind, being the Effect of that Power, which is in the Paper to produce it, is perfectly adequate to that Power; or else, that Power would produce a different Idea (2.31.12).

Quite unlike simple ideas, the complex ideas of substances are ectypal copies which are neither "perfect" nor "adequate":

which is very evident to the Mind, in that it plainly perceives, that whatever Collection of simple Ideas it makes of any Substance that exists, it cannot be sure that it exactly answers all that are in that Substance (2.31.13).

What makes an ectypal copy imperfect and inadequate is that it does not accurately reflect that after which it is patterned. This is due to the epistemological weakness of the understanding: it can know of substance, and be reasonably sure that it is, but it cannot with certainty know what it is. Knowing which simple idea coexist in a particular substance such

as "man" or "gold" allows one to know of a substance's nominal essence, but this does not allow one to know what that essence actually is. Its real essence still lies totally unbeknownst to man (2.31.13).

As opposed to complex ideas of substances, complex ideas of modes and relations

are Originals, and Archetypes; are not Copies, nor made after the Pattern of any real Existence, to which the Mind intends them to be conformable, and exactly to answer. These being such Collections of simple Ideas, that the mind it self puts together, and such Collections, that each of them contains in it precisely all that the Mind intends it should, they are Archetypes and Essences of Modes that may exist (2.31.14).

An archetypal copy is one which is precisely modelled after the original.

Mixed modes and relations can be of this character because they have

no other reality, but what they have in the Minds of Men, there is nothing more required to those kinds of Ideas, to make them real, but that they be so framed, that there be a possibility of existing conformable to them (2.30.4).

To ensure that these archetypes are not chimerical, the mere possibility of their existing is not enough,

they must have a Conformity to the ordinary Signification of the Name, that is given them, that they may not be thought fantastical: as if a Man would give them Name of Justice to that Idea, which common use calls Liberality (2.30.4).

This is implied by Tully's statement that

when Locke explains how modes and relations are made, he is not thinking that we, individually, make them. He is explaining how the normative framework of intersubjectively available general ideas, in accordance with which a society comes to be (1980: p. 18).

Locke's argument in Books II and III is this. Since general ideas such as

mixed modes and relations are archetypal, the abstract idea and its essence are the same. They are wholly the Workmanship of the mind or understanding (3.3.12,12,13,14., 3.5.13,14), but not of an individual, that of a collective unit, a linguistic community. Therefore the viability, and by definition the reality of mixed modes and relations lies in their reflecting conventional application (2.30.4.,2.31.4., 3.2.8., 3.5.8, etc.).

Locke's contention that complex ideas of mixed modes and relations are conventional in origin, in a sense, implies that they are context dependent: if context dependent is taken to be the dependency of mixed modes and relations, in terms of their meaning on the social context of which they are a part. If this assumption is true, then it is unlikely, although not necessarily so, that complex-ideas can be inter-culturally valid, as Locke admits:

A moderate skill in different Languages, will easily satisfy one of the truth of this, it being so obvious to observe great store of Words in one Language which have not any that answer them in another. Which plainly shews that those of one Country, by their customs and manner of Life, have found occasion to make several complex Ideas, and give names to them, which others never collected into specifick Ideas (3.5.8).

In Book IV, when Locke introduces his theistic Workmanship model, it will become evident that he no longer believes that mixed modes and relations derive their reality by conforming to common significance. At that point, his rationally theistic argument will rest on the assumption that conformity to a priori archetypes, not to conventional ones will determine the reality of mixed modes and relations. But before proceeding

to an examination of his position in Book IV, one epistemological concept, perhaps the most central to Locke's epistemology, remains to be reviewed: knowledge and the four types of agreement between ideas that comprises it.

4. Knowledge then seems to me to be nothing but the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our Ideas. In this alone it consists. Where this perception is, there is Knowledge, and where it is not, there, though we may fancy, guess, or believe, yet we always come short of knowledge (4.1.2).

As defined by Locke, knowledge is constituted by one's perception of an agreement or disagreement or by a necessary connexion between ideas.

When no such agreement or connexion is perceived, then in those instances, knowledge is not to be had. As to the types of knowledge, they are of three kinds: intuitive, demonstrable and sensitive, with the greatest measure of certainty being provided by the former, and the smallest measure by the latter. In order to understand properly this hierarchy, particularly the distinction between the first two types of knowledge, one must first become familiar with the four kinds of agreement or disagreement which may be perceived: identity or diversity, relation, co-existence or necessary connexion, and real existence. Since all propositions constitutive of knowledge are derived from one of these four kinds of agreement, their epistemological significance is obvious.

With respect to identity or diversity, Locke asserts that

'Tis the first Act of the Mind, when it has any Sentiments or Ideas at all, to perceive its Ideas, and so far as it perceives them to know each what it is, and thereby also to perceive their difference, and that one is not another (4.1.4).

Propositions such as to know that "what is, is" or "that it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be", are simple analytic ones, fundamental to his epistemology. They reflect "the first agreement, or disagreement, which the Mind perceives in its Ideas: which it always perceives at first sight" (4.1.4).

The Understanding in the consideration of any thing, is not confined to that precise Object: it can carry any Idea, as it were, beyond itself, or, at least, look beyond it, to see how it stands in conformity to any other (2.25.1).

An epistemology comprised of analytic propositions alone would be a rather limited and uninteresting one. Locke's notion of relation allows the epistemologist to tie one idea to another and to perceive the connections, or lack thereof, between them (4.1.5).

His primary example of a relational type of knowledge is mathematics (Mabbott, 1973: p. 81). This is because it is comprised of precise axioms from which demonstrably evident conclusions can be derived. To Locke, the axioms, and therefore the proofs, of morality are no less amenable to demonstration than are the ones which comprise mathematics. But as will be made evident shortly, a demonstrable relation, at least of the moral sort is only such within a social context: if this is true, then the potential incommensurability of social contexts will vitiate the possibility of attaining demonstrable knowledge which is interculturally valid.

As compared to relation, which describes the agreement or disagreement of ideas, co-existence or non-coexistence of ideas consists in determining

which ideas inhere in an object and which do not:

(When) we pronounce concerning Gold, that it is fixed, our Knowledge of this Truth amounts to no more but this, that fixedness, or a power to remain in the Fire unconsumed, is an Idea, that always accompanies, and is join'd with that particular sort of Yellowness, Weight, Fusibility, Malleableness, and Solubility in Aqua Regia, which make our complex Idea, signified by the word Gold (4.1.6).

In describing the substance known as "Gold", what one is actually doing is proffering a list of ideas which are usually associated with our idea of it. But as to what the substratum which underpins these attributes actually is, of this we have no certain knowledge.

"The fourth and last sort is, that of actual real Existence agreeing to any Idea, »(4.1.7); that it has a real existence without the Mind (4.1.7). Pyrrhonian scepticism, if accepted, implies that man's understanding cannot obtain positive knowledge of any sort, be it that of analytic truths, such as are considered, or of existential ones concerning the existence of oneself or of the external world. Locke has no doubts about the status of analytic truths, believing that their truth cannot be doubted seriously. But he does take the sceptics existential doubts of the external world as being an epistemological criticism of some importance. Although his reply is simple, its implications are significant. Of the sceptic he asks

Whether he be not invincibly conscious to himself of a different Perception, when he looks on the Sun by day, and thinks on it by night: when he actually tastes Wormwood, or smells a Rose, or only thinks on that Savour, or Odour? We as plainly find the

difference there is between an Idea revived in our Minds by our own Memory, and actually coming into our Minds by our Senses as we do between any two distinct Ideas (4.2.14).

The simplistic character of Locke's responses reflects the reasonable tenor of his epistemological arguments concerning the certainty of the ideas introduced to the mind by the senses. Neither the existence of the external world nor the accuracy of the information provided to the mind by the senses can be known with absolute certainty. This notwithstanding, of the differences between the ideas in one's memory and those introduced to the mind by the senses, there can be no reasonable doubt; this is no less true with respect to the belief that the senses indeed do provide the mind with accurate information about the external world. Whereas one's assurance is not absolute, the lack of reasonable doubt in such matters is a sufficient enough criterion of certainty to allow one to describe the information obtained through the senses as being constitutive of sense knowledge. In this regard, Locke's opinion was shared with his fellow Latitudinarians, Chillingworth (1820) and Tillotson (1976).

Whereas the knowledge obtained through the senses is of the external world, the knowledge obtained through intuition is analytic and through demonstration is inferential. Intuitive knowledge itself is derived from the immediate and almost instantaneous perception of the agreement or disagreement of ideas. It is

irresistable and like the bright Sunshine, forces it self immediately to be perceived, as soon as ever the Mind turns its view that way; and leaves no room for Hesitation, Doubt, or Examination, but the Mind is

presently filled with the clear Light of it (4.2.1).

Analytic propositions such as "white is not black", or "a circle is not a triangle", are two examples of intuitively known propositions.

As to the measure of certainty obtained when intuition perceives an agreement between ideas, Locke asserts that it offers man the highest measure of certainty that his natural reason can obtain:

A Man cannot conceive himself capable of a greater Certainty, than to know that any Idea in his Mind is such, as he perceives it to be; and that two Ideas, wherein he perceives a difference, and different and not precisely the same. He that demand a greater Certainty that this, demands he knows not what, and shows only that he has a Mind to be Sceptick, without being able to do so (4.2.1)

This sets him apart from Hooker who did not impose the analytic strictures on intuitive knowledge that Locke does. Hooker, asserted that when the mind perceives ideas in a clear and manifest way without the aid of a proof, this constitutes intuitive knowledge (1927: 2.7.5). Nevertheless, these ideas need not be analytic: one of his primary examples of an intuitive proposition is that the greater good is to be chosen before the lesser", a proposition of a discernably moral but nevertheless intuitive kind, at least in Hooker's eyes (1.8.5).

In a demonstration, intervening and necessarily connected ideas, constitutive of a proof, allow the mind to perceive an agreement between ideas which was not intuitively discerned. If it wants to determine whether there is an equality between the three angles of a triangle and a right one, it

cannot by an immediate view and comparing them, do it: Because the three Angles of a Triangle cannot be brought at once, and be compared with any other one, or two Angles; and so of this the Mind has no immediate, no intuitive Knowledge. In this Case, the Mind is fain to find out some other Angles, to which the three Angles of a Triangle have an Equality: and finding those equal to two right ones, comes to know their Equality to two right ones (4.2.2)

As to the measure of certainty that a demonstration affords, Locke asserts that knowledge by intervening proof, "is not altogether so clear and bright. . . the assent so ready (4.2.4), (nor is) all doubt removed (4.2.5). Furthermore, "'Tis true, the perception produced by Demonstration, is also very clear; yet it is often with a great abatement of that evident lustre and full assurance, that always accompanys that which I call intuitive (4.2.6)". Although demonstrably obtained knowledge does not provide the understanding with the alacrity of agreement that intuition does, nevertheless, the connexions and by implication, the proofs, that it discerns, are sufficient indications of its certainty. This argument places Locke well within the tradition of English "constructive scepticism".

Hooker had argued that the greatest measure of assurance attainable by the natural reason of men was afforded to them by plain aspect and intuitive beholding (1927: 2.7.5). When principles are neither evident by plain aspect nor by intuitive beholding then

what appeareth to be true by strong and invincible demonstration, such as wherein it is not by any way possible to be deceived, thereunto the mind doth necessarily assent, neither is it in the choice thereof to do otherwise (Hooker, 1927: 2.5.7).

Hooker's definition of demonstrability is cited by Chillingworth (1820) when he employs it (Van Leeuween, 1963: p. 22), and since Tillotson's (1976) reflections on demonstrability are similar to those of Chillingworth, one might assume that he is equally indebted to Hooker for his definition of the term.

But Chillingworth and Tillotson refine Hooker's definition of demonstration and provide it with a dual meaning: the first in metaphysical and mathematical matters, and the second in moral ones. Locke chooses not to make this analytic distinction, and this results in his positing a theistically derived theory of morality which is ambiguous and confusing. This will be made apparent in the forthcoming sections.

III. Locke's Epistemological Dichotomy

Two of Locke's main epistemological concerns in the Essay are related to morality: are moral principles conventional or theistic in origin, and what measure of certainty can one obtain in moral matters. With respect to these two questions, he is of two opinions, the first reflecting his rational conventionalism and the second, his rational theism.

Locke's rational conventionalism in Books II and III is indicative of his belief that moral ideas and relations are archetypal, and that their reality reflects their conformity to general signification. If mixed modes and relations derive their reality from their conformity to general significations then this implies that they are context dependent: for general significations are as disparate as are the social realities of

distinct societies and cultures, of which they are a part. A mixed mode or relation whose viability and reality is apparent in one social reality will not necessarily be perceived in the same manner in another one. Therefore, although the logical possibility that interculturally real and absolute principles can be ascertained by the understanding is an open one, Locke himself admits to its unlikelihood.

On the other hand, Locke's rational theism in Book IV is founded on the premise that moral ideas are archetypal, but their reality does not reflect conventional signification, it reflects congruity with divine a priori principles. True morality is transcendental and absolute, it is not context dependent. To make this evident, Locke must accomplish two things: 1) He has to prove that demonstrability, which is the highest measure of certainty obtainable in non-analytic matters, is not necessarily context dependent, and 2) he must show that man's fallible and passion-laden understanding is capable of devoting itself with the steadfastness and resolution necessary to discern the principles of the divine law. As is seen in the following sections, it is not at all clear that either of these two goals are accomplished.

2. To Locke, a proper understanding of moral ideas can only be obtained when one distinguishes between the meanings of a moral term such as lying, which is mixed mode comprised of simple ideas, and its relation to a rule, the divine law, the civil law, or the law of opinion (2.28.15). In other words, one has to distinguish between the "positive idea" of an action, its definition, and its "moral relation" to a rule:

Our Actions are considered as Good, Bad or Indifferent; and in this respect, they are Relative, it being their Conformity to, or Disagreement with some Rule, that makes them to be regular or irregular, Good, or Bad: and so, as far as they are compared with a Rule, and thereupon denominated, they come under Relation (2.28.15).

Like Hooker and Aquinas (1953) before him, Locke asserted that "the only true touchstone or moral rectitude" was the divine law, without which one could not know which actions are duties and which are sins. But from this theological assumption arises an epistemological problem of some moment: how does one obtain certain knowledge of this moral touchstone and of the principles which inhere in it. Unless Locke can provide the understanding with a way to accomplish this, then it cannot have an absolute moral standard with which to compare its positive moral ideas.

Locke's hypothetical solution to the problem is afforded to him by the theistic Workmanship model, but its usage is alluded to only in Book IV, not Book II. The reflections offered by Locke on this problem in Book II seem to strengthen his rational conventionalism more than his rational theism: this is particularly true when he considers the positive ideas of virtue and vice and their relation to the law of opinion.

Vertue and Vice are Names pretended, and supposed every where to stand for actions in their own nature right and wrong: And as far as they really are so applied, they so far are co-incident with the divine Law above-mentioned (2.28.10).

This seems to imply that for one to determine if the positive ideas of virtue and vice are being applied correctly, one must know of a rule which allows this to be ascertained. Then if this rule is discerned, it will

be coincidental with the divine law. Unfortunately, the evidence that Locke himself provides leads one to conclude that the likelihood of these principles being discerned is rather minimal.

(These) Names, Vertue and Vice, in the particular instances of their application, through the several Nations and Societies of Men in the World, are constantly attributed only to such actions, as in each Country and Society are in reputation or discredit. Nor is it to be thought strange, that Men every where should give the Name of Vertue, to those actions, which amongst them are judged praise worth; and call that Vice, which they account blameable (2.28.10).

In this statement, Locke acknowledges the intercultural discrepancy in the evaluative rules which determine the application of the ideas virtue and vice to positive actions; nevertheless, what he finds significant is that the descriptive dimension of the ideas themselves are commonly accepted. This in turn leads him to assert that the general acceptance of the descriptive dimension is evidence of their reflecting the divine rule of right and wrong:

For since nothing can be more natural, than to encourage with Esteem and Reputation that, wherein every one finds his Advantage; and to blame and discountenance the contrary: 'tis no Wonder, that Esteem and Discredit, Vertue and Vice, should in a great measure every-where correspond with the unchangeable Rule of Right and Wrong, which the Law of God hath established (2.28.11).

But in this regard, one point has to be made. the concomitancy of the descriptive dimensions of words provides minimal support for his theistic argument.

This is because Locke had argued previously that constant application, not description, would provide one with a rule whose coincidence with a divine one would be apparent (2.28.10). Having acknowledged that

application is not constant (2.28.10), he has tacitly admitted that no constant rule underpins the evaluative dimensions of the terms vice and virtue. By implication this means that an absolute rule is not discernable either. Although in principle Locke may still believe that a concomitance in the evaluative dimension of terms can be obtained, he has observed that in a number of instances they are not; and this conclusion seems to be more in accordance with his 'rational' conventionalism than with his rational theism.

3. In chapter 2, section 3, it was shown that in Book II, Locke's definition of mixed modes and relations meant that they were archetypal and that their reality depended on their conformity to general signification. In Book IV of the Essay, Locke's reflections on the rational and conventional foundations of mixed modes and relations shifts discernably away from convention towards theism. Conformity between archetypes and a priori archetypes, rather than between archetype and convention, now determines the reality of complex ideas.

(It) will be easily granted, that the Knowledge we may have of Mathematical Truths, is not only certain, but real Knowledge; and not the bare empty Vision of vain insignificant Chimeras of the Brain: and yet, if we will consider, we shall find that it is only of our own Ideas. The Mathematician considers the Truth and Properties belonging to a Rectangle, or Circle, only as they are in Idea in his own Mind. For 'tis possible he never found either of them existing mathematically, i.e. precisely true, in his Life (4.4.6).

If the truths and properties of triangles or other mathematical concepts are deductively evident to the understanding, then there can be no greater assurance that such ideas are real. Existence adds no reality to the validity of these ideas:

All the Discourses of the Mathematician about the squaring of a circle, conick Sections, or any other part of Mathematicks, concern not the Existence of any of those Figures: but their Demonstrations which depend on their Ideas, are the same, whether there be any Square or Circle existing in the World, or no (4.4.8).

These two passages make the extent of Locke's epistemological transformation quite apparent: his replacement of convention as the criterion of reality with a priori archetypes has now afforded him a wholly rational, and discernably Platonic, foundation for his arguments.

Moral ideas, like mathematical ones, are archetypal. Therefore, if Locke's rational theism allows him to posit that the reality of mathematical ideas reflects their conformity to a priori archetypes, this should apply to moral ones as well. Indeed Locke asserts that

moral Knowledge is as capable of real Certainty as Mathematicks. For Certainty being but the Perception of the Agreement, or Disagreement of our Ideas: and Demonstration nothing but the Perception of such Agreement, by the Intervention of other Ideas, or Mediums, our Moral Ideas, as well as mathematical, being Archetypes themselves and so adequate, and complete Ideas, all the Agreement or Disagreement, which we shall find in them, will produce real knowledge, as well as in mathematical Figures (4.4.7).

Unlike their fellow Latitudinarian, both Chillingworth and Tillotson choose to distinguish analytically between metaphysical demonstrations and moral ones. In metaphysical matters, the invincibility of Hooker's concept of demonstration is not challenged. However, when it comes to morality, they both assert that demonstrations are founded on presumption and probabilities, not on invincible strength (see chapter 2, sections 4 and 5).

Hooker's failure to discern between types of demonstration (1927: 2.7.5) perhaps reflects his feeling that all demonstrations, be they mathematical, moral, etc., are of equal strength and invincibility. At first, Locke follows Hooker's lead and does not distinguish between different kinds of demonstration. But upon further consideration, in Book IV, his opinion changes considerably. He admits that the disparities between mathematical and moral ideas are major ones, and when this is combined with man's moral corruption, it implies clearly that moral demonstrations have not the alacrity or necessity of connexion that mathematical ones do.

4. Locke argues that man has been given the ability to reason so that he may determine

Whatsoever is necessary for the Convenience of Life; and information of Vertue; and put within the reach of their Discovery the comfortable Provision for this Life and the Way that leads to a better (1.1.5).²

Furthermore,

How short soever their Knowledge may come of an universal or perfect Comprehension of whatsoever is, it yet secures their great Concernments, that they have light enough to lead them to the Knowledge of their Maker, and the sight of their own Duties (1.1.5).³

Man is God's creation, and as such he has been given the ability to reason and to ascertain the duties and obligations that are owed to his Divine Creator:

The Idea of a Supreme Being, infinite in Power, Goodness, and Wisdom, whose Workmanship we are, and on whom we depend, and the Idea of our selves, as understanding rational Beings, being such as are clear in us, would I suppose, if duly considered, afford such Foundations of our Duty and Rules of Action, as might place Morality amongst the Sciences capable of Demonstration: wherein I doubt not, but from self-evident Propositions, by necessary Consequences, as incontestable as those in Mathematics, the measures of right and wrong might be made out, to any one that will apply himself with the same Indifferency and

Attention to the one, as he does to the other of these Sciences (4.3.18).

The Workmanship model is a refined epistemological tool which affords to man's understanding the opportunity to discern the law of God, the same law which underpinned the moral philosophy of Aquinas and Hooker. Indeed, the measure of assurance that it affords to the understanding is of such certainty that Locke boldly claims that it can place morality amongst the sciences capable of demonstration: for this to be done the moral theorist needs to apply himself with the same diligence and attention that a mathematician employs when he considers the problems in his domain.

Locke asserts that "Where there is no Property, there is no Injustice, is a Proposition as certain as any Demonstration in Euclid" (4.3.18). For if one accepts the definition of property as being "the right to anything," and that of justice as being "the invasion or violation of the right," then the agreement or connexion between both terms in the proposition "Where there is no Property, there is no Injustice" is immediately perceived.

Indeed, if one accepts Locke's definition of property and of injustice, then one can derive a logical and therefore necessary connexion between them. But this meets only one of the two necessary requisites of demonstrability, the other one being the proof, and not the assumption that the principles in proposition are self-evident and true a priori (4.3.18). Since Locke does not prove that his principle terms are self-evident, one must conclude that their viability is context dependent, and

this in turn makes the connexion between the terms necessary only within that context: demonstrability is context dependent.

It seems that Locke's theistically founded epistemology has not afforded him a way to transcend a social context in the search for knowledge of absolute and divine principles. Although the assistance of absolute principles is not denied, it is becoming increasingly evident that knowledge of them which is demonstrable yet not context dependent is unobtainable.

5. Upon further reflection, Locke himself comes to doubt whether the analogy between mathematics and morality is as viable as he had originally thought it to be. This is due to two reasons: 1) the ideas considered by the moral theorist are quite dissimilar in terms of abstractness and complexity to those the mathematician reflects upon, and 2) man's corrupt nature and his penchant for vice and passion unduly restricts the efficacy of his reason in distinguishing between the true and the false, or the good and the bad.

One of the prime distinctions between the ideas contemplated by the mathematician and those of the moral theorist is that the former

can be set down, and represented by sensible marks, which have a greater and nearer Correspondence with them than any Words or Sound whatsoever. Diagrams drawn on Paper are Copies of the Ideas in the Mind, and not liable to the Uncertainty that Words carry in their Signification (4.3.19).

Although the principles of both morality and mathematics are archetypal in character, in that the mind determines their composition, its inability

to reflect sensibly moral ideas, prevents a moral theorist from constructing axioms and propositions with the same measure of precision as the mathematician does.

An Angle, Circle, or Square, drawn in Lines, lies open to the view, and cannot be mistaken: It remains unchangeable and may at leisure be considered, and examined, and the Demonstration revised, and all the parts of it may be gone over more than once, without any danger of the least change in the Ideas (4.3.19).

Sensible representation of mathematical ideas provides constancy and an unchanging framework upon which critical discussion can be founded. The verbal representation of moral ideas, and the frameworks of which they are a part, do not afford men this luxury. The frameworks are as susceptible to change as are the conventions from which they are derived.

A further distinction between the ideas of mathematics and those of morality reflects a disparity in complexity:

moral ideas are commonly more complex than those of the Figures ordinarily considered in Mathematicks... their names are of more uncertain Signification, the precise Collection of simple Ideas they stand for not being so easily agreed on, and so the Sign, that is used for them in Communication always, and in Thinking often, does not steadily carry with it the same Idea (4.3.19).

The simplicity of quantitative ideas makes them more amenable to precise definitions than is the case with moral ones, where few agree on their definitions. In Locke's eyes, the inability to reflect sensibly moral ideas as well as their inherent complexity, means that commonly accepted definitions of moral principles are difficult to obtain. Moreover, these two problems once again expose the vulnerability to convention and context that have previously been referred to.

At first glance, the enhanced certitude afforded to mathematical ideas by their amenability to sensible reflection, and the precise significations obtained through conventional agreement seems to contradict Locke's reflections on the strict a priori character and truth of mathematical ideas: that existence adds no reality to such ideas, and that they are true regardless of whether they are existentially manifested. This apparent inconsistency can only be explained as being another example of Locke's own uncertainty concerning the epistemological status of ideas, be they mathematical or moral. This notwithstanding, what one can derive from this discussion is that whatever the certitude of mathematical ideas, be it large or small, moral ideas are always of considerably lesser stature.

The disparities between mathematical and moral ideas are perhaps minor when one considers how pervasive the corrupting influence of vice and passion are on man's epistemological abilities, especially in moral matters:

The Ideas of Quantity are not those alone that are capable of Demonstration and Knowledge; and that other, and perhaps more useful parts of Contemplation, would afford us Certainty, if Vices, Passions, and domineering Interest did not oppose, or menace such Endeavours (4.3.18).

Diligence and attentiveness are not to be expected

whilst the desire of Esteem, Riches, or Power, makes men espouse the well endowed Opinions in Fashion, and then seek Arguments, either to make good their Beauty, or varnish over, can cover their Deformity (4.3.20).

In effect, this is an admission that the corruption of man's nature and his susceptibility to the influence of conventional opinion are of such an

extent, that the Workmanship model cannot provide him with demonstrable knowledge, of the unmitigated sort, of divine principles of moral conduct. Once again, this is not an admission that divine principles do not exist, only that demonstrable knowledge of them cannot be obtained.

6. Does the inability to obtain demonstrable knowledge which is not context dependent leave man in a wholly forlorn state? Not at all:

we shall then use our Understandings right, when we entertain all Objects in that Way and Proportion, that are suited to Faculties: and upon those Grounds, that they are capable of being propos'd to us; and not peremptorily, or intemperately require Demonstration, and demand Certainty where Probability only is to be had, and which is sufficient to govern all our Concernments (1.1.5).

The mitigated temper of this claim reflects Locke's neo-Hookerian and constructively sceptical epistemological attitude: to accommodate the understanding's assent to a measure of certainty which is not absolute yet which is sufficient enough to reasonably ensure it that it has not erred in its judgement. In Book IV, Locke's admission that one's assent in practical moral matters is founded on probability and not on certainty reflects the philosophical temper of the statement cited above:

The Understanding faculties being given to Man, not barely for Speculation, but also for the Conduct of his Life, Man would be at a great loss, if he had nothing to direct him but what has the certainty of true Knowledge. For that being very short and scanty as we have seen, he would be utterly in the dark, and in most of the Actions of his Life, perfectly at a stand, had he nothing to guide him in the absence of clear and certain Knowledge (4.14.1).

Locke concedes that demonstrable knowledge which is not context dependent and is certain in an absolute sense is unobtainable by the understanding;

nevertheless, this does not mean that knowledge of a more reasonable and mitigated kind similarly is beyond its grasp. Indeed, if one settles for a lesser measure of certainty in moral matters, reasonable assurance can be obtained.

To Chillingworth and Tillotson, there are two types of demonstrability, physical or mathematical, and moral. Whereas the first is obtained through the preception of logically necessary connexions, the second is derived from probability and presumption. Clearly these two types of demonstration, and the epistemological certainty they afforded one, were greatly different. It became apparent that the relatively low measures of certainty that probability and presumption afforded to moral demonstration led to a subjectivist impasse; for these criteria reflected the social reality of which they were a part, and in turn these social realities were as disparate as the cultures and societies of which they were a part. From an epistemological perspective, moral demonstrability potentially afforded the Calvinist as much certainty in his beliefs as the Presbyterian.

In Book IV of the Essay, the intent of Locke in positing a theistically oriented epistemology was to show that this subjectivist impasse was not an inescapable one: he wanted to prove that absolute principles not only exist, but that the understanding can obtain demonstrable knowledge of them.

To avoid this impasse, Locke chose not to distinguish between moral and mathematical demonstrations, as Chillingworth and Tillotson did, and

to argue that the understanding is as capable of perceiving logical and necessary connexions between self-evident ideas in morality as it is in mathematics. This he did not prove. In the end, he conceded that the corruption of the understanding and its susceptibility to the law of fashion made it inordinately difficult, if not impossible, to obtain demonstrable knowledge of absolute and divine moral principles (4.3.18). At best, moral certainty could be derived from a high measure of probability and presumption, but as will be seen, this definition makes Locke's moral arguments "subjectivistic", in the same way that those of Chillingworth and Tillotson were shown to be.

7. In those instances where the connexion between ideas is contingent and not necessary, as is the case with moral propositions, the understanding has been supplemented by an ability to judge and to weigh probabilities. By definition, judgement is the faculty which allows one to presume a connexion or agreement between ideas where none is intuitively or demonstrably perceived, but where it probably lies.

Probability is nothing but the appearance of such an Agreement, or Disagreement, by the intervention of Proofs, whose connexion is not constant and immutable or at least is not perceived to be so, but is, or appears for the most part to be so, and is enough to induce the Mind to judge the Proposition to be true, or false, rather than the contrary (4.15.1).

Propositions received upon the inducements of probability are of two sorts:

either concerning some particular Existence, or, as it is usually termed, matter of fact, which falling under Observation, is capable of Humane testimony, or else concerning Things, which being beyond the discovery of our Senses, are not capable of such Testimony (revelation) (4.16.5).

The first of these propositions is one which reflects particular matters of fact, a measure to which Tillotson as well as Locke accorded the lowest degree of certainty (1976: p. 394).

Where any particular thing, consonant to the constant Observation of our selves and others, in the like case, comes attested by the concurrent Reports of all that mention it, we receive it as easily, and build as firmly upon it, as if it were certain knowledge; and we reason and act thereupon it, with as little doubt, as if it were perfect demonstration. Thus if all English-men, who have occasion to mention it, should affirm, that it froze in England last Winter, or that there were swallows seen there in the Summer, I think a man could almost as little doubt of it, as that Seven and Four are Eleven (4.16.6).

If all Englishmen agree that "England froze last winter", then one can be reasonably sure that it did. But moral principles are not discernable to sensitive observation, they are inward reflections of the understanding, and as such have no manner of existence attributable to them outside of their conventional application. Whereas Hooker had argued that the greatest measure of certainty was afforded by the general consent of all men when this was obtained (1927: 1.8.3), Locke merely states that this type of agreement provides one with the greatest measure of probability:

the first therefore and highest degree of Probability is, when the general consent of all Men, in all Ages, as far as can be known, concurs with a Man's constant and never-failing Experience in like cases, to confirm the Truth of any particular matter of fact, attested by fair Witnesses: such are all the stated Constitutions and Properties of Bodies and the regular proceedings of Causes and Effects in the ordinary course of Nature (4.16.6).⁶

In practice, a coincidence of agreement is more likely to occur with respect to practical considerations such as physical movements than it is in speculative ones dealing with moral or religious considerations. With

respect to the latter, Locke offers no example of universally accepted principles with which one's testimony can be compared.

There are two lesser measures of probability, one obtained when there is a "for the most part concurrence" between one's experience and that of another (4.16.7), and the other being based on the attestation of "things happening indifferently", which occurs "when any particular matter of fact is vouched by the concurrent Testimony of unsuspected Witnesses" (4.16.8). Although these two measures of certainty are much removed from the highest one, general consent, they do offer sufficient assurance so that one's judgement in these matters should not be doubted. But they are of no great interest to the discussion of moral certitude.

The difficulty is, when the Testimonies contradict common Experience, and the reports of History and Witnesses clash with the ordinary course of Nature, or with one another; there it is, where Diligence, Attention, and Exactness is required, to form a right judgement, and to proportion the Assent to the different Evidence and Probability of the thing, which rises and falls according as those two foundations of Credibility, viz. Common Observation in like cases, and particular Testimonies in that particular instance, favour or contradict it (4.16.9).

Judgement is based on the probable but not certain agreement of ideas.

When an inconsistency between testimony and personal experience occurs, Locke's prescription is to be diligent and attentive, and weigh the evidence carefully. But given that probability is an imprecise and tentative measure of certainty, what might be plain and evident to one man is not to another. Epistemologically, both may be justified equally.

The measure of assurance that probability and presumption lend to moral beliefs is a rather tenuous one, and the "subjectivist" implications of them are no less intrinsic to Locke's epistemology than they were to Chillingworth's or Tillotson's: probability and presumption are criteria which are context dependent. Although the strength of one's convictions might make it seem that one's beliefs are underpinned by absolute and divine principles, this cannot be known with certainty: this means that the Calvinist has as much assurance that his moral beliefs are true reflections of the divine law as the Presbyterian or Catholic has of his own. In principle, the one way that absolute certainty can be obtained in moral or theological matters is by revelation: but if one pushes Locke's definition of revelation too hard, even this indubitable criteria will become context dependent.

IV. Reason and Revelation

1. Besides those we have hitherto mentioned, there is one sort of Propositions that challenge the highest degree of our Assent, upon bare Testimony, whether the thing propose, agree or disagree with common Experience, and the ordinary course of things, or no. The Reason whereof is, because the Testimony is of such an one, as cannot deceive, nor be deceived, and that is of God himself. This carries with it Assurance beyond Doubt, Evidence beyond Exception. This is called by a peculiar Name, Revelation, and our Assent to it, Faith: which as absolutely determines our Minds, and as perfectly excludes all wavering as our Knowledge it self; and we may as well doubt of our own Being, as we can, whether any Revelation from God be true (4.16.6).

In principle, revelation is the absolute arbiter of probability. It alone can provide the understanding with indubitable certainty in probable matters. There are two questions which follow from this assumption: 1) does revelation supplant reason in probable matters or merely supplement

it? and 2) is the certainty obtained through it sufficient to attain knowledge where none was to be had? Both of these questions can only be answered after Locke's definitions of reason and faith have first been examined.

Reason is

the discovery of the Certainty or Probability of such Propositions or Truths, which the Mind arrives at by Deductions made from such Ideas, which it has got by the use of its natural Faculties, viz. by Sensation or Reflection (4.18.2).

As opposed to this Faith

is the Assent to any Proposition, not thus made out by the Deductions of Reason; but upon the Credit of the Proposer as coming from GOD, in some extraordinary way of Communication. This way of discovering Truths to Men we call Revelation (4.18.2).

Can faith conflict with reason, as is the case when a Prophet, who claims to have been "inspired" by God, utters words which wholly contradict the principles of natural reason? Locke's response is that

the Knowledge, we have that this Revelation came at first from GOD, can never be so sure, as the Knowledge we have from the distinct Perception of the Agreement or Disagreement of our Ideas, v.g. If it were revealed some Ages since, that the three Angles of a Triangle were equal to two right ones, I might assent to the truth of that Proposition, upon the Credit of the Tradition, that it was revealed (4.18.4).

The ability to reason is a natural faculty given to man by God. When it is employed properly, it allows the mind to perceive a certain or probable agreement or disagreement between ideas. A revelation can never usurp the dictates of our reason. It cannot make one perceive a connexion between ideas where none is present. For example,

we can never assent to the Proposition, that affirms the same Body to be in two distinct Places at once, however it should pretend to the Authority of a Divine Revelation (4.18.5).

Therefore, "Faith in God is faith in the ultimate rationality and morality of the power continually operative and supreme in the universe" (Fraser, 1973: cxxiii).

God is not constrained by the rules of logic and reason to act in accordance with them, but rather, he has freely chosen to underpin the universe with reason so that man may be able to understand a small part of it himself, through the Workmanship model. Had God chosen to do other than he did, this would have rendered

all our Faculties useless; wholly destroy the most excellent Part of his Workmanship, our Understandings . . . For if the Mind of Man can never have a clearer (and perhaps not so clear) Evidence of anything to be a Divine Revelation, as it has the Principles of its own Reason, it can never have a ground to quite the clear evidence of its Reason, to give place to a Proposition, whose Revelation has not a greater Evidence, than those Principles have (4.18.5).

Were revelation able to upturn the dictates of man's reason, then man would have no critical faculty able to obtain knowledge, in any measure. He would be as forlorn as the Calvinist is without "inspiration".

In principle, revelation should supplement man's reason and enable him both to understand God's will more fully, and to discern connexions between ideas where none is apparent. But if the criterion for determining the viability of a revelation is its accordance with the principles of reason, then Locke's argument begs the question. He assumes that necessary or probable connexions between ideas are a reasonable indication of their

certainty, and that a revelation cannot supplant these connexions. Locke does not make it evident that the necessary or probable connexions between ideas is a reflection of absolute validity, only that they may be valid within a context. Therefore, to argue that revelation cannot supplant probable connexions wholly subordinates revelation to reason, conventionally derived, through Locke himself might not have seen it way. But Locke's views on revelation and reason do afford him with the epistemological underpinnings for an attack on "enthusiasm", the dreaded enemy of all "reasonable" men, and a defence of toleration, each of which were projects dear to Locke's heart (Passmore, 1978: p. 185).

The "enthusiasts" are men who substitute their own ungrounded fancies in the place of reason and certainty (4.19.4). They found their beliefs on the conceits of a warmed or over-weening Brain (4.19.8), and they place themselves outside of the constraints of God's reasonable universe. Reason and argument are looked upon with disdain. Personal "inspiration" becomes the sole criterion of truth and knowledge. But such arguments are inevitably circular ones, at least in Locke's eyes: the light shines because the enthusiast sees it, and he sees it because it shines (4.19.8). Locke asks of them satirically.

if the strength of perswasion be the Light, which must guide us; I ask how shall I or any one distinguish between the delusions of Satan, and the Inspirations of the Holy Ghost (4.19.13).

To this, the "enthusiast" can offer no response, but to Locke, there can only be one answer: Reason must be the last Judge and Guide in every Thing (4.29.13).

A rational man, as opposed to an "enthusiast" is one

who is dominated by a passion for the truth, as distinct from party passions. . . the rational man will blame the enthusiast. . . for not properly controlling his inclination to believe beyond the evidence (Passmore, 1973: p. 208).

By denying the efficacy of reason as absolutely as the "enthusiasts" have done, Locke believes that they have duly earned the wrath of reasonable men. But what of those men, who apply reason to the search for truth, but find that knowledge of absolute and universal principles of morality or natural religion are wholly beyond their grasp. Should their disparate beliefs be dealt with punitively or should respect and tolerance be shown to men whose piety and reverence for God are equal to one's own? Locke's response is simple yet reasonable:

It would methinks, become all Men to maintain Peace,
and the common Offices of Humanity, and the Friendship,
in the diversity of Opinions (4.16.4).

This statement, derived from his reflections on enthusiasm, is Locke's only explicit reference to toleration in the Essay. This would seem to vitiate the assumption that the epistemological defence of toleration in the Letters is linked analytically to the ideas on certainty in the Essay. In fact, it does not. For although the connexion between the two neither is manifest nor is it discerned easily, upon due consideration, the affinity between them reveals itself.

V. Locke's Reflections on Moral Ideas

It is quite apparent that one of the reasons that Locke dealt with the problem of moral certainty was his curiosity with respect to intercultural

disparities in moral beliefs. When he came to consider this problem he was of two minds, one made evident in Book IV, his rational theism, the other, appears in Books II and III, his rational conventionalism.

In Book IV, Locke asserts that moral ideas are archetypal, products of the mind. Then like Chillingworth, Tillotson and Hooker, the neo-Thomist, he argued that moral ideas were only real in as far as they conformed to absolute and a priori principles. As to one's knowledge of these ideas, Locke provides an epistemological tool, the theistic Workmanship model, which allows one to obtain demonstrable proof of them, although men must be diligent and steadfast in their application of it to the study at God's will. These are the assumptions that underpin Locke's rational theism.

In Books II and III, Locke argues that although moral ideas are archetypal, and are the Workmanship of the Mind, they derive their reality by conforming to conventional signification rather than to absolute and divine a priori principles. This is Locke's rational conventionalism. Together, both arguments provide Locke with three possible explanations of moral disparities: the first two follow from his rational theism, and the last one from his rational conventionalism.

1. True moral principles are divine in origin, and demonstrably evident, but too few men have applied themselves diligently enough to have obtained demonstrable knowledge of them through the Workmanship model (4.3.18., 4.4.7-9., 4.12.7,8).

2. True moral principles are divine in origin; however, it is the fallibility of the understanding, and not a lack of effort, that explains why true demonstrable knowledge has not been obtained (4.3.18,19,20). Demonstrability, when it has been obtained has been context dependent, and it provided one with no greater moral certainty than one founded on probability (4.14.1).

3. Morality is the Workmanship of a collective mind or understanding (3.12-14., 3.5.13,14), and consequently disparities in moral systems reflects the conventional and non-theistic origin of morality (2.30.4, 2.31.4., 3.2.8., 3.5.8., etc.).

Although in principle (in Book IV), Locke still believes that the Workmanship model can efficaciously provide one with knowledge of demonstrably evident moral principles, his admission that man's understanding is both fallible, and susceptible to the law of opinion (4.3.18,19), vitiates the plausibility of obtaining demonstrably certain knowledge of these principles. An implication of this is that one's moral beliefs, which must now be founded on probability and presumption, not on demonstrability, would tend to reflect a conventional interpretation of moral principles. This in turn, means that even though the existence of absolute and divine moral principles is not denied, it must be admitted that indubitable knowledge of them cannot be obtained. Each culture or society has its own moral beliefs, but they are all of an equal and "mitigated" certitude.

On the other hand, in Books II and III, Locke posits that moral principles are conventional in origin. Perhaps this reflects his belief that "the subjectivism" which Chillingworth and Tillotson encountered is a manifestation of context dependency, but a context dependency which is conventional in character: one cannot know of absolute and divine principles not because of one's fallibility, but because such principles do not exist. Consequently moral disparities are natural occurrences.

Although these two arguments appear to be mutually exclusive and inconsistent if taken together, they are not. For although they are both discerned within the Essay, Locke's rational theism is confined to Book IV and his rational conventionalism to Books II and III. Perhaps this implies that Locke was of two distinct and opposed minds at two different stages in his writing of the Essay. Indeed, if this is the case, then to attempt a reconciliation of the two opposed arguments is futile, and serves only to distract one from the main question: Why was Locke of two minds when it came to determining the origin of moral ideas. Although this question is an important one, unfortunately, at this stage it must remain unanswered.

Chapter 3: Footnotes

1. This passage is found in "the Epistle to the Reader", in the Essay.
2. See: Aquinas, 1953: ST I-II, 94 and Hooker 1927: Bk I, Section 8.
3. See: Tillotson, p. 363.
4. See: footnote 3, chapter 2.

Conclusion

Having examined Locke's epistemological ideas on certainty in the Essay, the strength of the analytic connexion between it and the Letters can now be ascertained fully.

In the Letters, Locke had argued that although one's moral beliefs might be steadfast and assured, they were neither certain nor were they constitutive of knowledge. Consequently, he asserted that the assumption that the enforced persecution of dissenters and non-conformists could lead them to know of the true religion, and to a greater spiritual good, which often was taken to be the national religion, was fallacious. In the Essay, Locke provides a detailed explanation of why the understanding is fallible, and why this prevents men from obtaining certain knowledge of moral or religious principles. In this regard, Locke is of two opinions, one which is outlined in Book IV, his rational theism, the other one which is evident in Books II and III, his rational conventionalism.

Locke's rational theism implies that no one, be he a magistrate or common person, can know of the divine law, the touchstone of all moral rectitude, with certainty; a claim he had also posited in the Letters. But in the Essay, Locke wants to prove that through diligent and steadfast effort demonstrable knowledge of these principles can be obtained through the theistic Workmanship model. Man's corruption, and his susceptibility to the law of opinion forced Locke to concede that it is unlikely that such knowledge could indeed be had, an admission that brings his argument into line with the one posited in the Letters: since epistemological certainty

in moral and religious matters cannot be attained, then the magistrate, or any other private person is wholly unjustified in persecuting dissenters and non-conformists to lead them to the true religion, which might only be discernable through revelation.

Locke's epistemological defence of toleration, underpinned by rationally conventional principles, is no less efficacious than the argument founded on a rationally theistic foundation. Once again, Locke concedes that demonstrable knowledge of moral principles or knowledge which is inter-culturally valid, cannot be obtained. But this is because moral beliefs are context dependent and reflect conventional signification, not because the understanding is corrupt and susceptible to influence. Therefore, the persecution of dissenters and non-conformists cannot lead them to a greater good, because, simply put, there are no absolute principles, constitutive of a greater good, which force can lead them to consider. Indeed, were Locke to be an atheist, his defence of toleration, underpinned by rationally conventional principles, would not be any less viable than the one supported by his rational conventionalism.

Locke's rational theism and his rational conventionalism are as important to the justification of cultural diversity and the self-determination of people's today, as they were to the defence of toleration at the end of the 17th century. Since there are no absolute standards whereby other cultures and societies can be judged or categorized, at least one's discernable to man's understanding, cultural disparity should be seen as a natural manifestation of disparate and equally viable patterns

(of understanding. If cultural diversity is natural, and there are no objective or absolute standards, then one should not look at disparate moral systems or cultural disfunctions with disdain and condescension, and attempt to impose one's own subjective principles on them. If intercultural relations are not amenable ones, then as a minimum, one should respect and tolerate mutual diversity and the right to act in accordance with one's own principles.

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