

LOCKEAN MORAL PHILOSOPHY

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LOCKEAN MORAL PHILOSOPHY – A SURVEY OF LOCKE’S WORLD AND WORLDVIEW IN LIGHT OF HIS MORAL PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS

While residing at Lord Ashley’s Exeter House in 1668, Locke engaged his friends in deep discussions on philosophy.¹ During their many dialogues, Locke noted that certain difficulties arose amongst them that made a furthering of intellectual exchange difficult. As found in his *Essay’s* “Epistle to the Reader”, Locke wrote the following regarding these incidents that would lead to him penning his most famous philosophical contribution:

Were it fit to trouble thee with the history of this Essay, I should tell thee, that five or six friends meeting at my chamber, and discoursing on a subject very remote from this, found themselves quickly at a stand, by the difficulties that rose on every side. After we had awhile puzzled ourselves, without coming any nearer a resolution of those doubts which perplexed us, it came into my thoughts that we took a wrong course; and that before we set ourselves upon inquiries of that nature, it was necessary to examine our own abilities, and see what objects our understandings were, or were not, fitted to deal with. This I proposed to the company, who all readily assented; and thereupon it was agreed that this should be our first inquiry. Some hasty and undigested thoughts, on a subject I had never before considered, which I set down against our next meeting, gave the first entrance into this Discourse; which having been thus begun by chance, was continued by intreaty; written by incoherent parcels; and after long intervals of neglect, resumed again, as my humour or occasions permitted; and at last, in a retirement where an attendance on my health gave me leisure, it was brought into that order thou now seest it.²

As evidenced in the quote, Locke came to the startling observation that worldviews produced a significant hurdle against the free-flowing exchange of ideas. In order to properly communicate morality and religion Locke was led to first provide a treatise on epistemology. Although this treatment proved immensely important in the history of ideas, the same cannot be said of

¹ Maurice Cranston, *John Locke, A Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 140-1. James Tyrrell, one of Locke's friends was at that meeting. He recalls the discussion being about the principles of morality and revealed religion.

² John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* Edited by Peter H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1974), 7.

Locke's contributions in the field of moral philosophy. Although it provided a motivational force to examine and promote his worldview, his ethical writings never achieved anything beyond scattered references within his major works. Although the absence and difficulty of a 'Lockean Moral Philosophy' is noted, there is value in attempting an analysis of these scatterings in light of Locke's developed worldview. With that in mind, this paper will set out to survey a Lockean presentation of moral philosophy through an analysis of the environment of ideas in which Locke resided, and the worldview in which Locke developed. Through analyzing both his ethical world and worldview, it will then suffice to conclude where Locke experiences his greatest failure, and how this very failure also results in his greatest contribution to moral philosophy.

PART I: LOCKE'S WORLD AND ITS DILEMMAS

Locke's Intellectual Environment

It is no surprise that such an influential character as Locke tends to be situated in a unique historical setting. During the 17th century Locke would live during a time in England where "the intellectual and scientific world, the political and economic world, change farther and faster than any of his forefathers had done."³ During the time Locke was growing up in the 1640s, England was ripe with extraordinary conflict. The Crown and Parliament were ensnared in a vicious struggle for control, coincided by the religious conflicts between Anglicans, Catholics, and Protestant dissenters. It is in English 17th century history that a climax is reached with the Glorious Revolution of 1688, whereas James II was driven from England and replaced by William of Orange.⁴ Such experiences with the chaotic months between Protectorate Cromwell's death and the Glorious Revolution surely had an impact on such later writings as his *Second*

³ Peter Laslett, *John Locke, Two Treatises of Government* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 16.

⁴ Ibid.

Treatise.⁵ In addition to the environmental experiences that would influence his works on epistemology and political theory, Locke's experience with individuals who argued in favor of innate moral principles present upon the 'Mind of Man' would lead him to his various ethics-focused responses.⁶

In addition to these environmental factors that would personally invoke Locke to discover a system of epistemology, it is profitable to note the current of moral conversation Locke finds himself carried into. With Locke we find a response that builds and critiques upon two major fields of ethical thought: (1) Natural Law Ethics in the line of Aquinas and promoted by Locke's contemporary, Richard Hooker; and (2) The Terrestrial/Egoistic Ethics of Grotius, Hobbes, and Pufendorf. After evaluating these two streams, we will become properly positioned to see where Locke is coming from with his moral philosophical treatment.

In his *Second Treatise*, the influence Richard Hooker had on Locke is noticed early on by his affectionate reference to the man as the 'judicious Hooker.'⁷ Although the two shared a healthy degree of agreement on the primacy of reason and toleration, Locke would reject Hooker's belief that the laws of nature were written upon the hearts of men in the form of an innate conscience. Hooker would produce an Anglican version of Aquinas' natural law, arguing that man could use his reason to evaluate both individual conscious and general agreement of moral laws among mankind.⁸ Rooted deeply in his aggressive refutation of the notion that ideas and morals were innate forms of knowledge, Locke would reject that moral laws were innately

⁵ Michael Curtis, *The Great Political Theories* (New York: HarperCollins, 1981), 359. "Locke's whole political thinking was a generalization about the value of the 1688 Revolution...[it] introduced the idea of limited monarchy in an age weary of civil war and of persecution, in a period when colonial expansion and a banking system were both developing."

⁶ John Yolton, *John Locke and the Way of Ideas* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956), 26-48.

⁷ John Locke, *Second Treatise of Civil Government* in *Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke* Edited by E. S. de Beer (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), II.5.

⁸ Vere Chappell, *The Cambridge Companion to Locke* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 209.

sewn upon the hearts of men, as well as question the existence of a *consensus gentium*.⁹

Although Locke did not embrace a purely Thomistic understanding of Natural Law, he did not deny that there existed a series of true basic moral principles.¹⁰ Rather, as will later be explained when Locke's epistemology is presented, Locke believed men accessed these moral principles through sense experience and rational reflection.

In addition to Locke's rejection of Hooker's characteristic treatment of an innate Natural Law, Locke would also devise his ethic in response to the terrestrial modifications of Grotius, Hobbes, and Pufendorf. Hugo Grotius was a Dutch lawyer, philosopher, apologist, and theologian whose works such as *De Jure Belli Ac Pacis Libri Tres* would profoundly influence the later creation of international law. Grotius would develop a moral psychology, which would argue that humans were sociable because they needed each other's help, enjoyed each other's company, and were naturally self-interested and competitive.¹¹ Grotius would remove the focus of natural law from being about the highest good to being about natural rights and how rational beings could best live together in society.¹² For Grotius, the basic law of nature is that man cannot have his rights violated, and as Chappell summarizes, "morality is what sets the ground rules for that competition and for the actions of the rulers in keeping society going."¹³ Chappell also notes that Grotius lacked a theory of obligation, and that "his claim that God merely sanctioned laws backing up independent rights seemed to relegate the divinity to a secondary

⁹ Ibid., 209.

¹⁰ Locke, *Essay*, I.3.13:75; *Letter 1309*, IV:112-23

¹¹ Chappell, *The Cambridge Companion to Locke*, 209.

¹² Hugo Grotius, *De jure belli ac pacis* in *The Law of War and Peace* Translated by Francis W. Kelsey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1968), 104. "Just as, in fact, there are many ways of living, one being better than another, and out of so many ways of living each is free to select that which he prefers"

¹³ Chappell, *The Cambridge Companion to Locke*, 210.

place in morality.”¹⁴ The problem set by Grotius’ modifications of natural law would be the absence of obligatory force, which is where the next thinkers worth mention enter the scene.

Thomas Hobbes would develop Grotius’ thesis as well as strengthen his psychological egoism, arguing that men are primarily driven by a selfishness that embraces appetites and averts the opposite.¹⁵ This psychological egoism would lead mankind away from a state of nature ripe with war and suffering, and towards an investment of his natural rights into an absolute sovereign whose coercive power could protect man’s desire for self-preservation.¹⁶ Through this focus on the absolute sovereign, Hobbes would provide a theory of obligation, yet at the same time carry the Grotian push of divinity as secondary to the extreme.¹⁷ God would become irrelevant to the discussion of objective morality, and instead focus would be placed simply on the contractual terrestrial obligation men owe to the will of the Leviathan-like sovereign.

The German jurist and philosopher, Samuel von Pufendorf, noted the dilemma of advisory vs. obligatory laws inherent in Grotian thought, as well as the Hobbesian tendency to bench the divine element of morality. Pufendorf would deviate from Grotius’ secondary placement of God in morality, and Hobbes’ disregard there-of, by adopting a medieval voluntarist view of God as indispensable for natural law in two ways: (1) Morality exists because God wills us to behave in a certain fashion, and (2) Natural laws necessitate being backed up by divine sanctions.¹⁸ Obligation for Pufendorf was found in doing the actions willed by a divine

¹⁴ Ibid., 210.

¹⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan and Philosophical Rudiments in The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, Edited by Sir William Molesworth (London: John Bohn, 1839), VI: 41. “For these words of good, evil, and contemptible, are ever used with relation to the person that useth them: there being nothing simply and absolutely so; nor any common rule of good and evil, to be taken from the nature of the objects themselves.”

¹⁶ Ibid., XXX: 333. “if the essential rights of sovereignty . . . be taken away, the commonwealth is thereby dissolved, and every man returneth into the condition, and calamity of a war with every other man, which is the greatest evil that can happen in this life,”

¹⁷ Chappell, *The Cambridge Companion to Locke*, 211.

¹⁸ Chappell, *The Cambridge Companion to Locke*, 211.

sovereign who was backed up by a rightful claim of superiority and the threat of afterlife punishment upon noncompliance. Like the others in the Grotian tradition, Pufendorf would emphasize reason as the medium to ascertain knowledge of these divinely given natural laws. In addition, whereas selfishness served as the driving force of Hobbes' moral psychology, Pufendorf would argue that gratitude to a benevolent law-giving God would serve as motivation over a fear of tyrannical coercive power.

Locke would find himself poised with the dilemmas that plagued those natural law revisionists in the Grotian tradition. How does one reconcile natural laws as not simply advisory but also obligatory? How does one affirm a central role of God for morality? What serves to motivate man to be moral? In addition to these questions, Locke would attempt to affirm absolute moral laws while writing against the traditional Thomist natural law theorists, the religious enthusiasts, and the skeptics of his day. As noted in his *Essay*, Locke would essentially argue that for the Christian, obligation rests within the will of God, as opposed to the Hobbists who placed obligation in the will of the Leviathan, and the 'Heathen' philosophers who placed it in the dignity of moral rectitude.¹⁹ It is to Locke's treatment of these questions via his scattered development of a moral philosophy and worldview that we now turn.

PART II: LOCKE'S WORLDVIEW AND ITS SOLUTIONS

Perhaps the greatest disappointment among Locke's many great accomplishments is his lack to provide a treatise on ethics. It has already been noted in the introduction that questions of morality and religion led him to draft his *Essay*. Such a concern would lead to the expectation of

¹⁹ Locke, *Essay*, I.3.5: 23-24. "That men should keep their compacts, is certainly a great and undeniable rule in morality; but yet, if a Christian, who has the view of happiness and misery in another life, be asked why R man must keep his word? he will give S this as a reason: Because God, who has the power of eternal life and death, requires it of us. But if a Hobbist be asked why, he will answer, because the public requires it, and the Leviathan will punish you if you do not. And if one of the old philosophers had been asked, he would have answered, because it was dishonest, below the dignity of a man, and opposite to virtue, the highest perfection of human nature, to do otherwise."

a similar robust treatment in the form of a treatise on ethics. Although no such document was produced, Locke had sewn his thoughts on morality throughout his various writings. In an attempt to systematically present these thoughts, especially as they respond to the dilemmas and challenges from the Grotian and Thomist traditions, we will examine them under four ethics-focused worldview divisions: (1) Lockean Epistemology; (2) Lockean Theology; (3) Lockean Anthropology; and (4) Lockean Moral Philosophy.

Lockean Epistemology: Against Innate Moral Principles

Locke's treatment of epistemology would become a major influence on his treatment of morality. Locke developed his epistemology of *tabula rasa* mainly in his mentioned *Essay*, which taught that man was born as a blank slate, with sense experience and reflection writing the objects of knowledge called ideas upon the mind.²⁰ In response to the claims of his contemporaries that morality was innate knowledge, Locke's epistemology would make no room for the claim, and instead he would argue that the law of nature "is not known through inscription or handed down by tradition but is known by reason through sense experience."²¹ In addition to aligning the discovery of moral laws through a Lockean understanding of epistemology, Locke would also siege the innate moralists with four main critiques. The first of these noted that conscience was simply opinion, with Locke claiming it "is simply one's opinion of the rightness or wrongness of one's own action, and one's opinions can come from education, or custom, or the company one keeps."²² Locke would also note that innate moral rules were

²⁰ Locke, *Essay*, I.1.8: 47. "It being that Term . . . which, I think, serves best to stand for whatsoever is the Object of the Understanding when a Man thinks, I have used it to express whatever is meant by Phantasm, Notion, Species, or whatever it is, which the Mind can be employ'd about in thinking."

²¹ John Yolton, *Locke and the Compass of Human Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 175.

²² Locke, *Essay*, I.3.9-13: 70-75.

refuted by a lack of consistent inner shame inline with the concept of an inner conscious, claiming "people frequently break basic moral rules with no inner sense of shame or guilt, thereby showing that the rules are not innate."²³ Supporting the former two critiques was a third directed at the lack of a universally accepted statement of these allegedly innate rules. A fourth critique offered by Locke was that reason made innate morality useless. As Chappell summarizes Locke's warning of the danger involved in assuming an enthusiastic or authoritarian presence of innate moral knowledge, "to claim that certain principles are innate is to claim that there is no need for further thought about the matters they cover; and this in turn is an excellent tactic for anyone who wants certain principles taken on authority, without inquiry."²⁴ With the difficulties and dangers of alleging an innate knowledge of moral laws established, Locke affirms the law of nature as right reason. Locke would therefore reject the equivocation of innate laws and the law of nature, stating instead that "there is a great deal of difference between an innate law and a law of nature; between something imprinted on our minds in their very original, and something that we, being ignorant of, may attain to the knowledge of, by the use and due application of our natural faculties."²⁵

Lockean Theology: Creator, Creature, and Law

While both affirming the existence of laws of nature and rejecting them as innately sewn and known within man's conscience, Locke is left asking the question of their source and justification. In this, Locke is thoroughly within the tradition of Christian Philosophers, regardless of the attempts of modernity to paint him as merely a humanist empiricist. Locke sets

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Chappell, *The Cambridge Companion to Locke*, 202.

²⁵ Locke, *Essay*, I.3.13.

to continue Pufendorf's attempts at making God's role in morality central, and rejects the Hobbesian treatment by acknowledging God as the sole source of moral rectitude.²⁶ For Locke, God has a right to determine moral rules by virtue of his status as the Creator over we the creature. On establishing these laws of nature, Locke argued that God "has a right to do it, we are his Creatures: He has Goodness and Wisdom to direct our Actions to that which is best: and he has Power to enforce it by Rewards and Punishments, of infinite weight and duration, in another Life: for no body can take us out of his hands."²⁷

Morality for Locke thus focuses on obligations and laws, which furthers a discussion of the centrality of the Lawmaker. For Hobbes, law is simply affirmed in its legal positivist form, and as such obligation is focused on the earthly lawgiver. Locke fuses the solution to the dilemmas of obligation and God's role in morality by noting a three-fold division of law, which he categorizes as "1. The Divine Law. 2. The Civil Law. 3. The Law of Opinion or Reputation, . . . By the Relation they bear to the first of these, Men judge whether their Actions are Sins, or Duties; by the second, whether they be Criminal, or Innocent; and by the third, whether they be Vertues or Vices."²⁸ God is thus the first and only perfect lawgiver whose ability and obligation requires "a life after this observable one, since it is plain that he does not make us obey him by rewarding and punishing in our present life."²⁹ Locke's morality is thus grounded on "the will and law of a god, who sees men in the dark, has in his hand rewards and punishments, and power

²⁶ Locke, *Essay*, II.28.8: 352. "This is the only true touchstone of moral Rectitude; and by comparing them to this Law, it is, that Men judge of the most considerable Moral Good or Evil of their Actions; that is, whether as Duties, or Sins, they are like to procure them happiness, or misery, from the hands of the ALMIGHTY,"

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid., II.28.7: 352.

²⁹ Ibid., I.5.8: 87-88; I.3.12: 74.

enough to call to account the proudest offender.”³⁰ With this foundational premise of Creator/creature, and Divine Law with its eternal sanctions established, the analysis may move to the agent of moral actions.

Lockean Anthropology: Moral Psychology of Desire and Duty

Locke would come to develop a more optimistic moral psychology that would revise Hobbes and others by focusing on redirecting the inner response of desire. Locke affirmed that man was to pursue happiness, yet rejected both a pessimistic understanding of passion as sinful self-love, and the calls of ancients such as Cicero to extinguish desire. As Marshall notes regarding Locke’s moral psychology, Locke turned “not to an account of men as sinfully passionate because they were dominated by a corrupt self-love, but instead, as so often, to a naturalistic account of men based upon commitment to God’s bounty.”³¹ Sin occurred when man was motivated to wrong actions by the passions, and “by not focusing upon God’s rewards and instead preferring terrestrial pleasures, allowing their reason to be led by the passions.”³² Men are to pursue pleasures because God placed desire within them, however they are to utilize their rational capacities to mold their passions after God’s eternal divine law. Locke both affirmed a duty to pursue the passions, yet noted that these passions did not imply a solely terrestrial hedonism, but a God-centered pursuit.³³ Given God’s role as Lawgiver, and the presence of rewards and punishments on an eternally infinite scale, man’s reason should lead him to the reality that the greatest pleasure and greatest punishment resides not in the sanctions of a state,

³⁰ Ibid., I.3.5.

³¹ John Marshall, *John Locke Resistance, Religion and Responsibility* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 186.

³² Ibid., 188.

³³ Ibid., 188.

but in the sanctions and solace of a divine Sovereign. A terrestrial hedonism was thus converted into a celestial variation.³⁴ As Sell explains, "utility is not the criterion of virtuous action, the will of God is."³⁵ The prospect of an agent's happiness provokes desire, and provoked desire prompts questions of the greatest pleasure.³⁶ Pleasure is thus proper when pointed by reason to pursue God, given His divine moral prescriptions and principles, and the justification of these principles by the prominence and principality of the sovereign Creator.

Lockean Moral Philosophy: The Moral Science of Unease and Action

With his epistemology, theology, and anthropology surveyed and serving as a foundation for his ethical worldview, Locke defined ethics as "the seeking out of those rules and measures of human actions which lead to happiness, and the means to practise them."³⁷ For Locke this is hardly a static study of "bare speculation and knowledge of truth . . . [but] right and a conduct suitable to it."³⁸ Locke is focused on providing a moral philosophy that motivates not simply reflection but implementation, affirming as necessary to any real morality the rule of prescriptivity.³⁹ Locke then makes two conclusions stemming from his moral psychology and epistemology: (1) The ancients' *Summum Bonum* fails prescriptivity; and (2) The will is not determined by belief and innate claims, but uneasiness. Regarding the *Summum Bonum*, Locke argues there is no point in discussing the highest good of the ancients. The question of which life would give us the most happiness, such as presented by Epicurus ('the most satisfying one'), is

³⁴ Alan Sell, *John Locke and the Eighteenth-Century Divines* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1997), 115.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Locke, *Essay*, II.11.41-42: 258-259.

³⁷ Ibid., 4.21.3.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Louis Pojman, *Ethics Discovering Right and Wrong* (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1990), 5. "Prescriptivity refers to the practical or action guiding nature of morality . . . They are intended for use, to advise and to influence to action."

derailed in light of the different degrees of desires and likings. Happiness is agreed to be the goal, but pains and pleasures "to different Men, are very different things."⁴⁰ This then cannot possibly adhere to his rule of prescriptivity that actions must be practical and action guiding. In addition,

The will is not determined by our beliefs about what course of action would bring us the greatest amount of good. If it were, Locke argues, no one would sin, since the prospect of eternal bliss or torment would outweigh every other. . . . only thoughts of pleasures and pains can arouse uneasiness, so that laws not backed by sanctions would be quite pointless. They could not move us to act.⁴¹

Ethics was thus a science of action that focused on the "attainments of things good and useful . . . [relying on the] skill of right applying of our own powers and actions."⁴²

Lockean Moral Philosophy: The Moral Calculus

Locke sought to place the focus of this science of action on action words, or 'notions'. These action words, such as hypocrisy, justice, adultery, and murder, could be learned by observation, however they are mainly obtained by having them explained to us.⁴³ These notions are primarily definitional and prescriptive, and secondarily descriptive. The precision of these action words leads Locke to conclude there exists a mathematical precision to ethics, whereas falsity of the action words are impossible, and instead something can only be said to relate to the notions in degrees or wrong naming of instances.⁴⁴ The action words set up a definitional ideal, which leads the observer to implement the notions with others through conceptual analysis.⁴⁵ An

⁴⁰ Locke, *Essay*, II.11.55: 269.

⁴¹ Chappell, *The Cambridge Companion to Locke*, 204.

⁴² Locke, *Essay*, IV.21.3.

⁴³ Locke, *Essay*, II.22.9.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, III.11.17.

⁴⁵ Yolton, *Locke and the Compass of Human Understanding*, 161.

example of Locke's definitional calculus of morals would work as follows: (1) Property is defined as "a right to anything," (2) Injustice is defined as "the invasion or violation of that right", (3) Thus, the proposition is certain, that "where there is no property there is no justice."⁴⁶ Essentially, Locke's goal was to provide a reasonable and real morality that examined the divine laws evidenced in nature as gained through sense experience and rational reflection.

CONCLUSION

Where Did Locke Fail?

Having examined the world of moral thought in which Locke participated and found influence, as well as having surveyed a systematic worldview-focused treatment of his moral musings on epistemology, theology, anthropology, and moral philosophy, several key points are worth noting. Locke's essential claim is that "from self-evident propositions, by necessary consequences as uncontestable as those in mathematics, the measures of right and wrong be made out to anyone that will apply himself."⁴⁷ Although Locke sprinkled certain assumed laws of nature throughout his works, he would fail to respond to the challenges of friends such as Catherine Cockburn and William Molyneux, who requested Locke provide a treatise demonstrating these 'self-evident propositions.' Locke argued that through reason, man could discover the first principles that would demonstrate the necessary natural laws needed to guide moral behavior. However absent was the proof that there existed a connection between these ideas, let alone a complete list of such primary principles. Locke would argue in *Reasonableness* that there existed two ways to produce a full morality: (1) Revelation, and (2) Natural Reason. Locke sought "unquestionable principles to an entire body of the law of nature," given a full

⁴⁶ Locke, *Essay*, IV.3.18.

⁴⁷ Locke, *Essay*, IV.3.18; IV.3.4.

morality would need to branch out from these foundational reason-acquired norms.⁴⁸ Although Locke had noted in passing some of these foundational principles, Yolton concluded that his chief failure was not only lacking a proof of demonstration, but a proof of connection between such principles. He concluded,

It is much more likely that Locke was unable to discover the truth of this claim--that all moral concepts are linked by necessary relations--than that he failed on the demonstration. Of course, if a set of concepts are not in fact linked together such that an understanding of any one concept will lead on to others and eventually to the entire set, a demonstration of those connexions will be impossible . . . unable to show the systematic connexions between all moral concepts, Locke abandoned the demonstrative programme and settled for a haphazard listing of moral rules as required for illustration or for appeal to sanction some action. The nearest he ever came to a listing of moral rules is found in the Reasonableness, where he cites a large number of moral injunctions as interpreted by Jesus (pp. 115-22). That list is nothing more than the standard Christian morality.⁴⁹

Where Did Locke Succeed?

With his failure to provide a treatise evidencing this moral demonstration from reason, where did Locke conclude? As earlier stated, Locke was adamant that God's law served as "the only true touchstone of moral rectitude," and provided this as evidence of "the eternal and unalterable nature of right and wrong" against charges of grounding morality on reputation and customs or relativity.⁵⁰ Locke sought to develop a moral calculus that, presuming his worldview of epistemology and anthropology, demonstrated normative laws of nature. However, he failed to (1) produce this treatment in the form of a treatise, (2) prove the connection between first and secondary moral principles, and (3) provide proof for the immortality of the soul that served as foundational for his Christian hedonism and sanction-backed Lawgiver. However all is not lost regarding Locke's moral philosophy. His focus on the Creator/creature distinction, the three-fold

⁴⁸ Locke, *Works*, VII. 138-140.

⁴⁹ Yolton, *Locke and the Compass of Human Understanding*, 171-172.

⁵⁰ Locke, *Essay*, II.28.8; II.28.11.

division of law, the primacy of Divine Law in determining moral principles, and the elevation of reason to consider the infinite pleasures stored in an infinite God, are all fruitful contributions and solid responses to Grotian revisions and Innate moralist assumptions. Yet perhaps the greatest moral philosophical contribution Locke offered is not necessarily where he went wrong, but where he afterwards went.

As Marshall concludes regarding Locke's failure to demonstrate his moral calculus, "he ended his life by recommending the Bible above all of these works and by composing works of biblical exegesis."⁵¹ As Sell notes, "this is consistent with his view that notwithstanding the insights of ancient and modern philosophers, 'the morality of the gospel doth exceed them all, that, to give a man full knowledge of true morality, I shall send him to no other book, but the New Testament.'"⁵² Locke is right to argue in his moral philosophy for the centrality of God as Creator, Lawgiver, and Judge. Although Locke got half of the equation correct in his argumentation, it may be acknowledged that he got the other correct in practice. Moral principles have already been demonstrated in both word and form, including an incarnational presentation of both perfected in the unison of the *Logos*, Christ Jesus. Locke's project was already completed and made available by that very Creator and Lawgiver he grounded his inquiry upon. Although Locke's failure severely undermined his attempt at a demonstrable moral science, the resulting focus placed on the Scriptures produced his greatest moral philosophical contribution.

"That God is to be worshipped," is, without doubt, as great a truth as any can enter into the mind of man, and deserves the first place amongst all practical principles.⁵³

Such a place is reserved for where Locke later resided: God's worship manual, the Scriptures.

⁵¹ Marshall, *John Locke Resistance, Religion and Responsibility*, 157.

⁵² Sell, *John Locke and the Eighteenth-Century Divines*, 113.

⁵³ Locke, *Essay*, IV.7.

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