

## *Pirates, Kings and Reasons to Act: Moral Motivation and the Role of Sanctions in Locke's Moral Theory*<sup>1</sup>

PATRICIA SHERIDAN  
University of Guelph  
Guelph, ON N1G 2W1  
Canada

Locke's moral theory consists of two explicit and distinct elements — a broadly rationalist theory of natural law and a hedonistic conception of moral good. The rationalist account, which we find most prominently in his early *Essays on the Law of Nature*, is generally taken to consist in three things. First, Locke holds that our moral rules are founded on universal, divine natural laws. Second, such moral laws are taken to be discoverable by reason. Third, by dint of their divine authorship, moral laws are obligatory and rationally discernible as such. Locke's hedonism, which is developed most fully in his later *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, consists in the view that all good amounts to pleasure, with specifically *moral* good taken to consist in the pleasurable consequences of discharging one's moral duties. The normative or 'action-guiding' force of moral rules arises from the manner in which morally regulated actions affect the utility (hedonistically construed) of the moral agent. Commentators have had a difficult time deciding just how, or if, these two distinct elements can work together in Locke's account. Certain commentators view the rationalist and hedonist elements of Locke's account of morality as significantly mismatched. For instance, both W. von Leyden and Richard Aaron have argued that the rationalist account

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of the *Essays on the Law of Nature* gives way, by the time of the *Essay*, to a more strongly hedonistic position. Though they acknowledge the apparent persistence of Locke's rationalism in later works, they see it as standing in tension with the hedonistic doctrine of the *Essay*.<sup>2</sup>

However, a different strain of interpretation suggests that Locke's moral theory suffers from no such internal tension. Commentators such as John Colman and Stephen Darwall have argued that Locke's hedonism should be understood strictly as a theory of moral motivation — one that works alongside his broadly rationalist account of natural law and moral obligation. On this view, Locke's hedonism was introduced in order to account for the *practical force* of the obligations arising from natural law (i.e. their effectiveness in guiding conduct), but it was not meant to supplant the rationalistic grounding of natural law proposed in earlier works. Though I am generally sympathetic to this line of interpretation, I will argue in what follows that its detailed articulation, particularly in Darwall's work but to some extent in Colman's as well, stands to exaggerate the gap between moral obligation and moral motivation that evolves in Locke's moral philosophy. The problem is most conspicuous, I will suggest, in the account's view of the function of divine rewards and punishments in Locke's broader moral theory. For both Darwall and Colman, Locke's motivational hedonism requires that natural law be enforced by a system of divine rewards and punishments since, in the absence of any such system, the obligations specified by natural law would be motivationally inert. I shall argue that Locke envisioned (compatibly with his general motivational hedonism) a stronger connection between moral obligation and moral motivation than this view suggests. I will further argue that Locke's insistence on the essentiality of rewards and punishments to the system of natural law, though clearly speaking to the issue of moral motivation, can be explained without appeal to the deep motivational gap that Darwall and Colman see it as bridging.

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2 W. von Leyden argues that for Locke, 'the development of his hedonism and certain other views held by him in later years made it indeed difficult for him to adhere whole-heartedly to his doctrine of natural law' (John Locke, *Essays on the Law of Nature*, W. von Leyden, ed. [Oxford: Clarendon 1954], 14). In a similar vein, Richard I. Aaron writes: 'Two theories compete with each other in [Locke's] mind. Both are retained; yet their retention means that a consistent moral theory becomes difficult to find. The first is hedonism, which, in Locke's writings, assumes the form that the good is whatever produces pleasure ... The second is rationalism, the view that reason alone can determine what is truly good' (Richard I. Aaron, *John Locke* [Oxford: Clarendon 1971], 257).

## I Natural law and moral obligation

Locke's *Essays on the Law of Nature* (hereafter referred to as the *ELN*), written in the 1660s, is a collection of eight essays devoted to defining natural law and establishing the basis of a moral epistemology suitable to its discovery. In these essays, Locke defines natural law as 'the decree of the divine will discernible by the light of nature and indicating what is and what is not in conformity with rational nature, and for this very reason commanding or prohibiting' (*ELN*, 82).<sup>3</sup> Locke's argument for the existence of natural law rests upon an analogy between moral laws and physical laws. Just as things in the physical and biological domains exhibit lawful behaviour, it is reasonable to suppose that human beings are law-governed. The law that governs human life, like that governing all other living things, is not merely suited to life's maintenance, but is a 'plan, rule, or ... pattern' of life (*ELN*, 81). Locke relates this teleological view to Aristotle's position in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, which he views approvingly: '[Aristotle] rightly concludes that the proper function of man is acting in conformity with reason, so much so that man must of necessity perform what reason prescribes' (*ELN*, 83). For Locke, morality is an outgrowth of human nature. Humans are, by nature, rational beings, and it is by application of their rational capacities that such beings are able to discover natural law. For Locke, the greater our rational exertions, the more clearly we are able to discern moral law.

Though Locke is (in the *ELN*) clearly invested in a teleological view of natural law, I want to suggest that the appeal to teleological considerations serves a restricted purpose. Apart from establishing the connection between natural law and human nature, Locke's interest in teleology is more or less confined to the aim of establishing a natural-theological foundation for natural law. For Locke, the importance of locating human conduct within the broader domain of teleologically determined activity consists in the evidence of God's governance that the teleological order affords. Hence, Locke argues that from the 'beauty ... order, array and motion' of the objects of sense, 'it is undoubtedly inferred that there must be a powerful and wise creator of all these things, who has made and built this whole universe and us mortals who are not the lowest part of it' (*ELN*, 103). The acknowledgement of God as the 'powerful and wise creator' of 'us mortals' is crucial to Locke's conception of natural law, for

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3 All in-text references to the *ELN* refer to John Locke, 'Essays on the Law of Nature,' in *Locke: Political Essays*, Mark Goldie, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1997).

it is the moral agent's relation to God that accounts for the obligation to obey the rules of morality that reason naturally discloses:

For, ultimately, all obligation leads back to God, and we are bound to show ourselves obedient to the authority of his will, because both our being and our work depend on his will, since we have received these from him, and so we are bound to observe the limits he prescribes; moreover, it is reasonable that we should do what shall please him who is omniscient and most wise. (*ELN*, 117)

It is important to recognize that Locke is not endorsing the species of voluntarism according to which the *content* of natural law is straightforwardly determined by God's fiat. Locke's teleological commitments make it clear that he takes the promptings of human nature to be adequately illuminating as to natural law's content. He claims, for instance, that 'we can infer the principle and a definite rule of our duty from man's own constitution and the faculties with which he is equipped' (*ELN*, 105). Locke's point in emphasizing divine authorship is, rather, to account for the *obligatory force* of natural law. Though the content of natural law is an outgrowth of human nature, the obligation to *abide by* the dictates of natural law originates in 'the authority of [God's] will.' Since 'both our being and our work' depend upon divine will, and since God is 'omniscient and most wise,' we are obliged to show obedience in observing 'the limits he prescribes.'

Seen in this light, Locke's natural theological argument for natural law is, at the same time, a rationalist account of the grounds of moral obligation. Since the laws of our nature that reason discloses are the expression of God's authoritative will, and since they are discerned to be so by reason itself, it follows that we are rationally bound to abide by their dictates. Moral obligation is therefore a matter of obedience to proper authority.

## II Obligation and Motivation: Locke's Hedonism

John Colman aptly characterizes Locke's natural law theory as 'thoroughly legalist.'<sup>4</sup> For Locke, law by its very nature presupposes proper authority both as a ground for its institution and as a basis for its enforcement. Stephen Darwall echoes Colman's view when he writes that Locke is working with 'a fundamentally *juridical* notion, essentially

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<sup>4</sup> John Colman, *John Locke's Moral Philosophy* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press 1983), 71

involving authority, or the right to rule.<sup>5</sup> However, neither Colman nor Darwall reads Locke as treating the obligations that attach to natural law by dint of its divine authorship as sufficient to guide the practical deliberations of moral agents. Darwall makes the point by suggesting that, for Locke, the kind of moral reason that a divine law furnishes to the moral agent 'is nothing an agent can rationally act on — it is not a reason *for acting*....'<sup>6</sup> For Darwall, Lockean natural laws furnish moral reasons in the sense that they specify moral duties. However, such reasons are, in themselves, practically inert. In order for them to serve the function of guiding conduct, they must relate in some significant way to an agent's motives.

In the *Essay*, Locke develops a thoroughgoingly hedonist theory of motivation. For Locke, all of our ideas originate in sensation or reflection. Joined to virtually all of them are feelings of pleasure or pain. According to Locke, God established this connection in order that we might always be motivated to thought and action. Locke claims that if we had no perception of delight, 'we should have no reason to prefer [sic] one Thought or Action, to another; Negligence, to Attention; or Motion, to Rest. And so we should neither stir our Bodies, nor employ our Minds; but let our thoughts (if I may so call it) run a drift, without any direction or design; and suffer the *Ideas* of our Minds, like unregarded shadows, to make their appearances there, as it happen'd, without attending to them' (*Essay*, 2.7.3).<sup>7</sup> The feelings of pleasure and pain attached to our ideas provide the initial impetus for the exercise of practical rationality. Uneasiness, for example, moves the mind to consider those ideas that will relieve our suffering or bring us what we desire. Locke writes, 'It has therefore pleased our Wise Creator, to annex to several Objects, and to the *Ideas* which we receive from them, as also to several of our Thoughts, a concomitant pleasure, and that in several Objects, to several degrees, that those Faculties which he had endowed us with, might not remain wholly idle, and unemploy'd by us.' (*Essay*, 2.7.3)

Locke ties this general theory of motivation to his conceptions of morality and natural law in a number of places. For example, in his essay entitled *Of Ethic in General* (c. 1686-8), Locke writes that sanctions are the means by which superiors enforce the laws, 'it being impossible to set

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5 Stephen Darwall, *The British Moralists and the Internal 'Ought': 1640-1740* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1995), 37

6 *Ibid.*, 37

7 All in-text references to the *Essay* refer to John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, P.H. Nidditch, ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1975).

any other motive or restraint to the actions of a free understanding agent but the consideration of good or evil; that is, pleasure or pain that will follow from it.<sup>8</sup> In his essay entitled *Voluntas* (1693), Locke writes, 'The pleasure that a man takes in any action or expects as a consequence of it is indeed a good in itself able and proper to move the will.'<sup>9</sup> In the *Essay*, Locke ties his specific conceptions of *moral* good and evil to those of good and evil, generically understood, in the following terms:

Good and Evil ... are nothing but Pleasure or Pain, or that which occasions, or procures Pleasure or Pain to us. *Morally Good and Evil* then, is only the Conformity or Disagreement of our voluntary Actions to some Law, whereby Good or Evil is drawn on us, from the Will and Power of the Law-maker; which Good and Evil, Pleasure or Pain, attending our observance, or breach of the Law, by the Decree of the Law-maker, is that we call *Reward* and *Punishment*. (*Essay*, 2.28.5)

Thus for Locke, reward and punishment are species of good and evil (pleasure and pain) that take their distinctively moral character from their connection with the authoritative decrees of a rightful legislator. Indeed Locke goes so far as to suggest that the notions of rightful rule and reward/punishment are internally related: 'It would be in vain for one intelligent Being, to set a Rule to the Actions of another, if he had it not in his Power, to reward the compliance with, and punish deviation from his Rule, by some Good and Evil, that is not the natural product and consequence of the Action itself.' (*Essay*, 2.28.6)

Passages such as these clearly express Locke's view of the centrality of pleasure and pain (especially as embodied in a system of rewards and punishments) in any system of law. It is precisely these kinds of passages that lead Darwall and Colman to suggest that, for Locke, a system of divine sanctions is necessary in order for considerations of obligation to gain any purchase in the practical deliberations of moral agents. Darwall writes that for Locke 'what makes God's commands morally obligatory [i.e. God's authority] appears ... to have nothing intrinsically to do with what makes them rationally compelling';<sup>10</sup> it is 'the hope of divine reward and fear of punishment [that] make obedience be in the agent's rational interest.'<sup>11</sup> Colman's account agrees with Darwall's; he writes that '[r]ight is the central concept in Locke's natural law doctrine, but the

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8 John Locke, 'Of Ethic in General,' in Goldie, *Locke: Political Essays*, 301

9 John Locke, 'Voluntas,' in Goldie, *Locke: Political Essays*, 321

10 Darwall, *British Moralists*, 37

11 *Ibid.*, 39

law could have no purchase on human conduct unless doing that which is right were in some way productive of good. 'Good' is the central concept in his moral psychology.<sup>12</sup> It is clear in this context that Colman means by 'good' the Lockean notion of 'moral good' — i.e., pleasure arising as result of discharging one's duty in conformity with moral law. It is also clear that Colman, like Darwall, sees Locke as *equating* morally relevant goods and evils with the rewards and punishments that God has attached to moral law. Colman claims that Locke 'distinguishes between our having moral obligations and our having reasons for discharging those obligations. The reasons he emphasises are the rewards and punishments God has attached to the observation or neglect of the law of nature.'<sup>13</sup>

For both Darwall and Colman, Locke's later hedonism is reconciled with the earlier rationalist account of natural law by way of the doctrine of divine sanctions that occurs in both contexts. We have already reviewed passages that indicate Locke's view of the necessity of rewards and punishments for any system of law in his mature works. And it should be acknowledged that Locke *does* hold essentially the same position on rewards and punishments in the early *ELN*. In Essay V, for instance, he writes that both God and the soul's immortality 'must be necessarily presupposed if natural law is to exist' (*ELN*, 113). Darwall surmises, correctly to my mind, that in treating the soul's immortality as a prerequisite for natural law, Locke must be treating the rewards and punishments promised in the afterlife as essential to the functioning of natural law. And Locke states explicitly in the same essay that 'law is to no purpose without punishment' (*ELN*, 113). However, there are the passages in the *ELN* that speak strongly against the suggestion that Locke sees divine rewards and punishments as *exhausting* the motivations for obedient conduct.

In Essay VI Locke offers us the example of the person who is constrained, in the first instance, to the service of a pirate, and in the second instance to a legitimate ruler. In these two cases, he explains, there are clearly *two distinct grounds of obedience*:

Anyone would easily discern in himself that this is so and perceive that there was one ground of his obedience when as a captive he was constrained to the service of a pirate, and that there was another ground when as a subject he was giving obedience to a ruler; he would judge in one way about disregarding allegiance to a king, in another about wittingly transgressing the orders of a pirate or robber. For

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12 Colman, *John Locke's Moral Philosophy*, 49

13 *Ibid.*, 72

in the latter case, with the approval of conscience, he rightly had regard only for his own well-being, but in the former, though conscience condemned him, he would violate the right of another. (*ELN*, 118)

Read casually, this passage might not seem to pose a substantial difficulty to Darwall's and Colman's interpretation: it could be argued that Locke is merely distinguishing between cases where obedience is coercively induced *without* the backing of rightful authority (as in the captive's service to the pirate), and cases where it *is* so backed (as in obedience to a rightful ruler). The difference is shown in the fact that conscience judges *disobedience* in the two cases differently. Seen in this light, the passage might be regarded simply as an elaboration of Locke's doctrine that moral obligation derives from the authority of a legitimate legislator. However, what this reading fails to capture is Locke's suggestion that the two cases involve distinct 'ground[s] of obedience.' This terminology would be puzzling if Locke were not here treating the recognition of obligation as (somehow) motivationally operative. If Locke's examples are not taken as speaking to the issue of motivation, but seen rather as commenting strictly on the connection between obligation and authority, it would be puzzling how Locke could view the presence of genuine obligation as making any difference to the grounds of obedience. If, as Colman and Darwall suggest, considerations of obligation are motivationally inert, the agent's grounds for obedience ought to be the same in the two cases, but Locke clearly *is* differentiating between *two* grounds for obedience.

The suspicion that Locke, at the time of the *ELN* at least, views obligations as somehow supplying motives is further reinforced by a later comment from the same essay. Locke tells us that 'we should not obey a king just out of fear, because, being more powerful he can constrain (this in fact would be to establish firmly the authority of tyrants, robbers, and pirates), but for conscience' sake, because a king has command over us by right; that is to say, because the law of nature decrees that princes and a lawmaker, or a superior by whatever name you call him, should be obeyed' (*ELN*, 120). Locke's claim that obedience to a rightful authority should be given 'for conscience' sake' *rather than* 'out of fear' strongly suggests that Darwall's and Colman's sanctions-based account of moral motivation does not tell the whole story. How, after all, could obedience to the decrees of natural law, or to the authoritative will of a rightful superior, be undertaken on any other basis than the superior's power to 'constrain' if the sanctions attaching to law are the *only* motivational inducements to obedience? What can the contrast between acting 'for conscience' sake' and acting 'out of fear' amount to if a rightful superior's power to constrain through sanctions is the sole ground of moral motivation?



It will perhaps be thought that this line of reflection poses an obstacle to *any* attempt to reconcile Locke's early view of natural law and moral obligation with the hedonistic doctrine that emerges more clearly in the later writings. However, I now want to argue that certain of Locke's later writings suggest a different route toward reconciliation. Darwall's and Colman's accounts run into trouble because, as far as moral cases are concerned, they construe motivation strictly in terms of Locke's view of the practical force of divine sanctions. However, it is important to recall that, for Locke, sanctions are merely a subset of pleasures and pains. Locke's hedonism is *general* in the sense that it views *all* conduct as ultimately motivated by considerations of pleasure and pain. In the first of two essays written in 1692, entitled, respectively, *Ethica A* and *Ethica B*, Locke writes as follows of the pleasure that accrues to the moral agent who does good to others, in keeping with moral duty: 'Whoever spared a meal to save the life of a starving man, much more a friend, which all men are to us whom we love, but had more and much more lasting pleasure in it than he that eat it. The other's pleasure died as he eat and ended with his meal. But to him that gave it him 'tis a feast as often as he reflects on it.'<sup>14</sup> It is clear that the pleasure that Locke sees the agent as gaining through the charitable act (and his subsequent reflections upon it) is not simply the pleasure of expected reward, for in the same essay Locke describes such pleasures as being independent of the pleasures of the afterlife. Locke explicitly characterizes the necessity for divine rewards and punishments as arising from the fact that there are those who would *deny* that happiness attaches to the duties of love and charity:

Happiness ... is annexed to our loving others and to our doing our duty, to acts of love and charity, or he that will deny it be so here because everyone observes not this rule of universal love and charity, he brings in a necessity of another life (wherein God may put a distinction between those that did good and suffered and those who did evil and enjoyed by their different treatment there) and so enforces morality the stronger, laying a necessity on God's justice by his rewards and punishments, to make the good the gainers, the wicked losers.<sup>15</sup>

Thus for Locke, the happiness that attaches to 'loving others' and 'doing our duty' is not, in the first instance at least, the happiness of divine reward. Rewards and punishments are, rather, a matter of God's justice. Punishments, in particular, are reserved for those who do not accord due weight to the pleasures of love and duty, and for this reason, fail to

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14 John Locke, 'Ethica A,' in Goldie, *Locke: Political Essays*, 319

15 *Ibid.*, 319

discharge their moral obligations. Sanctions are, in general, a matter of 'enforc[ing] morality the stronger,' but they are not primary in the order of moral motivation. Locke's suggestion is, rather, that pleasures *intrinsic* to the obedient act can and should move one to one's duty.

This interpretation begins to make sense of how the distinction Locke draws (in the *ELN*) between acting 'for conscience' sake' and acting 'out of fear' appears in the more overtly hedonistic context of his later works. Since Locke's hedonism constitutes a general theory of motivation, it is not open to him to suggest that conscience can motivate independently of considerations of pleasure. However, insofar as Locke acknowledges a species of pleasure intrinsic to dutiful conduct and views this species of pleasure in contradistinction to the motivations supplied by divine sanctions, the distinction between acting for conscience's sake and acting out of fear may be construed as follows: to act for conscience's sake is to be motivated by pleasures *internal* to dutiful conduct — it is, as it were, to *take pleasure in* discharging one's duty. By contrast, to act out of fear is to be guided by the prospect of goods and evils external to, but contingently consequent upon, one's actions. In moral cases, fear of punishment supplies a motive for those who are not adequately moved by the satisfactions inherent in dutiful conduct. But, as Locke suggests, this role for sanctions is a matter of 'enforc[ing] morality the stronger'; it is *not* a matter of dispelling any motivational vacuum resulting from their absence. For Locke, agents can be motivated to right conduct by moral satisfactions entirely distinct from the goods and evils of reward and punishment.

### III The special role of sanctions

The account just offered agrees with Darwall and Colman's views to the extent that it regards the hedonism of Locke's mature moral theory as compatible with that theory's early expressions in the *ELN*. However, since it rejects Darwall's and Colman's contention that divine sanctions are necessary for moral motivation, some explanation is needed for why Locke so strenuously insists, in both early and late writings, that sanctions *are* necessary for natural law. If sanctions are not necessary for moral motivation, then why does Locke maintain that 'law is to no purpose without punishment' (*ELN*, 113). I will conclude my discussion with a brief account of this matter.

To begin, it is worth emphasizing that Locke's commitment to varieties of moral motivation other than expectations of reward or punishment in no way entails that he does not see sanctions as motivating obedience to natural law. Thus in attributing to Locke the view that moral obedience carries intrinsic satisfactions sufficient to motivate

moral agents, I do not mean to deny that Lockean moral agents *can* be motivated to obedience by considerations of reward and punishment. My view is rather that Locke holds a two-tiered account of moral motivation, according to which humans can be motivated to right action by *either* the intrinsic satisfactions of obedience *or*, failing this, the consideration of divine sanctions. For Locke, human beings have the rational capacity to discern the content and obligatory force of natural law as well as the motivational capacity to abide by its dictates without the threat of sanctions. However, it is clear that Locke sees these capacities as insufficiently realized in many cases. We have already noted that Locke sees the necessity of reward and punishment in the afterlife as owing (in part at least) to the fact that there are those who fail to be moved by the pleasures inherent in duty. We may further note that in the *Essay*, Locke expresses a general pessimism concerning human ‘veneration for’ and ‘persuasion of’ the dictates of natural law. He writes, ‘if we will not in Civility allow too much Sincerity to the Professions of most *Men*, but think their Actions to be Interpreters of their Thoughts, we shall find, that they have *no* such internal Veneration for these Rules, nor so *full a Perswasion of their Certainty and Obligation*’ (*Essay*, 1.3.7). For Locke, then, humans are flawed in at least two respects: they can fail to acknowledge their obligations under natural law, and they can fail to discharge these obligations even when they are acknowledged. In neither case does Locke suggest that a remedy by way of sanctions is necessary for the coherence of morality *per se*. Indeed, it is quite clear that Locke sees at least the latter defect as a kind of moral failing in its own right, which presupposes that the normative force of morality withstands the kind of failures of compliance that Locke has in mind.

For these reasons, I think it doubtful that Locke views sanctions as necessary to natural law considered strictly as a system of *morality*. In what sense, then, does he consider sanctions as necessary to natural law? My suggestion is that it is in natural law’s function as a system of *law*, as opposed to a system of morality *per se*, that Locke conceives of the necessity of sanctions. More specifically, Locke sees sanctions as imbuing the principles of natural law with *force of law*, where this force would be missing were they to function as principles of morality *simpliciter*. In this connection, it is important to emphasize that Locke sees sanctions as operating as a mechanism of *enforcement* — one that provides motives to obedience in view of men’s propensity to abdicate the responsibilities that reason leads them to acknowledge (or would lead them to acknowledge were it properly exercised). In the *ELN*, Locke writes, ‘Those who refuse to be led by reason and to own that in the matter of morals and right conduct they are subject to a superior authority may recognise that they are constrained by force and punishment to be submissive to that authority and feel the strength of him whose will they refuse to follow’

(ELN, 117). Thus sanctions serve to ensure that even people who ‘refuse to be led’ by the natural promptings of practical reason nevertheless have reasons to abide by the decrees of divine law. Sanctions ensure that the moral principles embodied in natural law function *as* a system of law — i.e. as a system that enforces compliance of with authoritative decrees even where the inducements of conscience fail.

This conception of the role of sanctions accords well with Locke’s comments on the necessary connection between law and sanctions in the *Essay*. Locke writes:

Since it would be utterly in vain, to suppose a Rule set to the free Actions of Man, without annexing to it some Enforcement of Good and Evil, to determine his Will, we must, where-ever we suppose a Law, suppose also some Reward or Punishment annexed to that Law. It would be in vain for one intelligent Being, to set a Rule to the Actions of another, if he had it not in his Power, to reward the compliance with, and punish deviation from his Rule, by some Good and Evil, that is not the natural product or consequence of the Action it self. For that being a natural Convenience, or Inconvenience, would operate of itself without a Law. This, if I mistake not, is the true nature of all *Law*, properly so called. (2.28.6)

If this passage is to be reconciled with Locke’s contention that pleasures intrinsic to the performance of duty *can* afford sufficient motivation to the moral agent (see above), it cannot be understood as suggesting that rewards and punishments are necessary for moral motivation as such. However, it reads very naturally as a comment on the prerequisites of ‘law’ in light of Locke’s observations concerning the tenuousness of morality’s sway in the practical decisions of most agents. For Locke, the notion of a rule carrying the force of law would be entirely ‘vain’ were the inducements (i.e., pleasures) of morality in every case sufficient to secure obedience. In that case, obedient conduct would prevail simply as a matter of the ‘natural Convenience’ of moral agents. For Locke, law has a place only where the intrinsic inducements of duty fail. By the same token, law’s effectiveness depends on its supplying motives that are ‘not the natural product or consequence of the Action it self.’ Hence sanctions are necessary for natural law’s functioning *as* law.

As Locke conceives of it, natural law functions as a mechanism of social control — one that provides for the general peace, safety, and order characteristic of a morally regulated society. As Darwall puts it, ‘saving human beings from their inability, left to their own devices, rationally to settle problems of collective action is precisely God’s purpose in laying down and sanctioning the law of nature.’<sup>16</sup> Like Hobbes, Locke appreci-

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16 Darwall, *British Moralists*, 49

ated the motivating power of fear as a means of enforcing social order. For this reason, when Locke speaks of morality as embodied in a system of natural law, he frequently alludes to rewards and punishments as a necessary component. This is not because morality cannot motivate without sanctions, but because morality *per se* lacks the ability of sanctions-backed laws to ensure general compliance. Rewards and punishments are important for Locke since they serve to ensure that the dictates of natural law will prevail in the general *regulation* of human conduct. Seen in this light, God's imposition of sanctions is strictly instrumental. As Locke puts it in his 1680 essay *Of God's Justice*, 'though justice be also a perfection which we must necessarily ascribe to the supreme being, yet we cannot suppose the exercise of it should extend further than his goodness has need of it for the preservation of his creatures in the order and beauty of the state that he has placed each of them in.'<sup>17</sup> Meting out justice in the form of rewards and punishments is the means by which God preserves, not morality, but *the moral order* in its broader social manifestations. Locke goes on to explain that any misery God brings upon those who disobey his commands is meant to preserve the safety and happiness of everyone. Sanctions have the specific purpose of bringing about social good: '[God's] justice is nothing but a branch of his goodness, which is fain by severity to restrain the irregular and destructive parts from doing harm; for to imagine God under a necessity of punishing for any other reason but this, is to make his justice a great imperfection.'<sup>18</sup>

God attaches sanctions to his laws because there are people who will not heed the dictates of natural law otherwise, not because they *cannot*, but because they (predictably) *will not*.

#### IV Conclusion

Though I agree with Darwall and Colman that Locke's early moral theory, as expressed in the *ELN*, is compatible with the hedonistic theory of motivation that becomes prominent in his mature writings, I maintain that they are mistaken to equate Lockean moral motivation with expectations of reward and punishment. I have shown evidence that Locke acknowledged hedonistic reasons for agents to act on moral rules quite apart from expectations rewards and punishments. I have also argued

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17 John Locke, 'Of God's Justice,' in Goldie, *Locke: Political Essays*, 278

18 *Ibid.*, 278

that Locke's conception of the necessity of sanctions to the system of natural law can be accounted for without endorsing the equation between sanctions and motivations that Colman and Darwall propose. On my account, Locke views sanctions as necessary for the effectiveness of morality construed as a system of law, but this is to be distinguished from the view that sanctions exhaust the moral reasons agents may have for discharging their obligations. Without denying that aptness of the characterization of Lockean morality as 'juridical,' it is, in my view, a touch *less* juridical than Colman and Darwall make it out to be.

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