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The Concept of Obligation in Selected Works of John Locke,
and as Articulated in American Society: Communitarian
Critiques and a Response from Locke's Work
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies in the School
for Summer and Continuing Education of Georgetown University
has been read and approved.

[Signatures]

April 19, 1993
THE CONCEPT OF OBLIGATION IN SELECTED WORKS OF JOHN LOCKE,
AND AS ARTICULATED IN AMERICAN SOCIETY:
COMMUNITARIAN CRITIQUES AND A RESPONSE FROM LOCKE'S WORK

A Thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
degree of
Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies

By

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April 19, 1993
Abstract

This paper investigates the nature of the individual's obligation to society as it emerges in several works by John Locke and as it has developed in contemporary U.S. society. This investigation is illuminated by contemporary communitarian theorists' assertion that excessive, so-called "Lockean" individualism, imperils the social coherence and political survival of the American republic. That concept of "Lockean" individualism identifies the individual as appropriately dominant in society and the public good as originating from the exercise of largely unrestrained individual rights. However, evidence is strong that that traditional "liberal" view of individual rights is out of proportion to the obligations that constructive coexistence requires of individuals in twentieth century American society.

This paper examines several works by John Locke, including his Second Treatise of Government, A Letter Concerning Toleration, and Some Thoughts Concerning Education to discover the roots of Locke's concept of individualism, as well as possible remedies for so-called "Lockean" individualism. In contrast with Locke's works, this paper examines several works by "communitarian" theorists, specifically Habits of the Heart and The Good
Society by Robert N. Bellah and his several coauthors, as well as articles by several liberal critics of "communitarian" theory.

It seems clear that the U.S. needs a revised "social contract" which promotes public policy that treats both the public good and that of the individual as fundamental to the survival of American society. Yet, it is equally evident that communitarian theory may be too limiting, in its concentration on civic virtue, to answer as a remedy for social problems in a pluralistic democracy. As a society we must adopt remedies that will not debase the individual freedoms that make such thoughtful examination possible. Locke's works on Toleration and Education offer likely remedies for U.S. Society's ills.
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Introduction: The Concept of Individual Obligation: "Rights and Responsibilities"?

In February 1991 Harper's Magazine published a discussion among a journalist, several prominent academicians, and the mayor of a mid-sized American city on the proper balance of civic rights and responsibilities of American citizens. This timely discussion raised sobering questions about American society's capacity to endure as a democracy. Despite some disagreement as to the scope of the problem and the means for correction, the speakers agreed upon one key point: contemporary Americans largely do not grasp the necessary sense of obligation that relates the individual citizen to the community, that mutual connection which safeguards individual liberty, nor do we recognize the need to maintain that bond in good order through the exercise of "traditional" civic virtues.¹ In the Harper's forum Professor Mary Ann Glendon remarked,

While rights have been proliferating, we have paid little attention to the seedbeds of civic virtue from which rights derive their surest protection...People for the American Way recently completed a survey of the political attitudes of young Americans. The students were asked, 'What makes America special?' Overwhelmingly, the young people answered, 'Our rights and freedoms,' which they characterized in a way that classical philosophers would recognize not as liberty

but as license. People for the American Way, a group not noted for worrying about excessive liberty, said it's time to sound the alarm that America's youth has learned only half of the democratic equation: They have almost no sense of civic participation and responsibility.²

The Latin root of obligation is *obligatio*, defined as a "bond", or "tie"³, a connection of the sort between human beings that classical philosophers knew to be vital in securing the common good of the community. Yet, often it seems that in practice modern Americans' definition of obligation is one of dreary duty forced upon the individual by circumstance or society, a burden to be avoided if at all possible.

Sociologist Robert N. Bellah and his coauthors of *Habits of the Heart* and *The Good Society* are among a growing number of social critics who fault "Lockean individualism" in great part for making feeble the tie of obligation between the individual and society in the United States.⁴ Bellah and coauthor William Sullivan are two participants in an informal association of scholars and others, of varied

² Ibid., p.44.


political persuasions from right to left of political center, called "communitarians." Communitarians hold that modern American society is in severe social and political distress because of our culture's ever-expanding devotion to individual rights as the foremost concern in private and public life and our simultaneous inattention to our life as a community. Although communitarians do not all agree on corrective means, by and large they maintain that Americans' customary focus on individual rights as consistently and properly dominant in society has expanded out of proportion to the real individual and societal obligations that peaceful, constructive coexistence requires of citizens in twentieth century American society. Bellah, Sullivan and other communitarians pose several critiques of the effect of extreme individualism and neglect of community on American society and recommend measures that would promote greater citizen responsibility for considering and responding to the problems American society faces.

Many of the political principles on which the Framers of the U.S. constitution relied, and various of our fundamental social mores derive from precepts that eighteenth century English political philosopher John Locke
described in his Second Treatise of Government. The thesis of this paper is that the communitarian concern is well-founded: the coherence of U.S. society is unsettled by Americans' increasingly stark individualism. Serious public dialogue must begin to prevent the U.S. republic from dwindling into merely "formally free" society.

Yet, there are participants even in the communitarian dialogue who do not attribute the apparent unequal relationship of individualism over society to Locke's political theory but to a misconception of the tenets of classical liberalism and a misuse of Locke's ideas. Thomas A. Spragens, Jr. judges American society's evident "excessive" individualism and seeming scanty civic obligation actually to be libertarianism of a peculiarly outlandish sort which he describes as an obtuse, self-serving aberration of classic liberalism. The contours of

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5John Locke, "Second Treatise of Government" in Two Treatises of Government, ed. Peter Laslett, Cambridge University Press, 1988. While contemporary scholars debate the extent of the Framers' use of Locke's works, Thomas L. Pangle writes in The Spirit of Modern Republicanism that though the reasonings of Hume and Montesquieu are referred to throughout the Federalists, "yet it is the concepts, categories, and terminology of John Locke that Publius employs when he adverts to the ultimate questions."p. 125.

the communitarian complaint include not simply individualism run rampant but an attendant societal blindness to the fundamental requirements for preservation of even a merely self-interested community of individuals. And, in fairness to Locke, so called "Lockean individualism" has flourished in historical and social developments in the United States that Locke could never have foreseen. Given the general contention of communitarians that the connection between individuals and community in the U.S. is distressed and that this infirmity endangers the cohesion of our republic, this paper will discuss whether grounds combined from several of John Locke's works may suggest useful ways to begin to revitalize the bond between the individual and the community.

The question may be asked, why seek remedies in Locke's theory, the presumed origin of the problem of excessive individualism, when serviceable strategies abound in various communitarian theories? The answer lies in Lockean liberal theory's implicit goal of a broad "common good" constituted by universal justice that offers individuals in a civil society the opportunity to attain their personal conception

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7Good Society, pp.265-6, Habits, pp.119-20.
of "the good." The basis for this philosophy of universal justice is in the natural plurality among human beings of diverse conceptions of the good, most strikingly in a heterogeneous society such as the United States. With a plethora of imaginable human goods, the fundamental good that legitimate democratic government should support is a guarantee of security and liberty that enables citizens lawfully to exert themselves toward obtaining their individually chosen good. This is what U.S. liberal democracy has assured for the vast majority of citizens of the United States in the last few hundred years.

Human history shows that it is a complex enterprise to forge a "common good" out of a mass of individually desired goods, no matter whether the "good" be intangible virtue or physical property. Yet, a particular common good, which by its nature rules out many alternative goods, in this case communitarian theorists' political tenet of civic virtue which in various instances might override individual preference when they come into competition, ignores a good society's necessary origin in fairness. Just as individuals

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8On this, Amy Gutmann writes, Justice may be prior to the good...because giving priority to justice may be the fairest way of sharing the goods of citizenship with people who do not accept our conception of the good, from Communitarian Critics of Liberalism, p.311,N.14, in "Philosophy & Public Affairs", 14:3, Summer, 1985, pp.308-22.
cannot dwell in security without stable community, community
cannot endure among individuals who perceive themselves to
be unjustly repressed. Supplanting a society's universal
good, justice, with a particular good of civic virtue which
requires enlarged individual obligation to society, will
serve to oppress those who disagree with the community's
chosen good. Any civil government must use some level of
coercion to enforce at least minimal laws to keep the
society united. The question is how much and what sort of
coercion might be used in a liberal democracy to maintain
social unity and provide the security with liberty on which
the society was founded. In an article rejecting
communitarians' "anti-liberal" thought, Stephen Holmes notes
the truism that,

All political arrangements involve the use of physical
force.

But, he insists that,

...antibileral should be specific about the conditions
under which, in their ideal order, sanctions would be
applied. Does moral revulsion at 'radical separation'
among citizens require making divorce and emigration
illegal? What does a commitment to 'solidarity' imply
about the authority of majorities over dissident
minorities?..Would present-day antibilerals advocate
making incivisme into a punishable crime-as it was in
France during the Terror?9

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9Stephen Holmes, "The Permanent Structure of Antiliberal
Thought" in Liberalism and the Moral Life, ed. Nancy L.
Rosenblum, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989,
p.231.
In contrast with communitarian goals, the broad liberal
common good of equality under settled laws, though it leaves
room for sometimes abusive arrogation of rights by
individuals and minorities, offers the surest opportunity
for the overwhelming majority of citizens to safeguard and
improve their lives.

Many interpretations of Locke's works exist, many are
conceivable, some more plausible than others. The
discussion in this paper is presented as an illustration of
one possible merging of certain of Locke's ideas to address
the problem which communitarian critics describe. In
addressing this issue this paper looks first at "excessive"
individualism as contrasted with the concept of individual
obligation to society. This point will be accompanied by a
consideration of the failures of responsibility of American
citizens and public institutions as described by Robert
Bellah and his several co-authors who term themselves
"communitarian" social theorists. Ordinarily, scant public
consideration has been given by citizens or government to
individuals' reciprocal obligation to their society, except
in response to sporadic, dramatic threats to society such as
war. Communitarians assert that a sense of obligation to
the community is necessary in citizens to create and
maintain a conception of the common good; and a conception
of the common good is necessary for a society, especially a republic, to cohere and endure. Liberal critics of communitarians, such as Stephen Holmes, no doubt are correct in suggesting that communitarian theory is limited by the particularity of its foundation, virtue, and its likely drift toward coercion to foster individual obligation and civic virtue. Yet, communitarian theory offers considerable material that might promote a new dialogue on individual obligation. At the least, communitarian ideas can serve as a foil against which revitalized liberal political theory can be considered. Holmes chides sarcastically communitarians (antiliberals) for omissions and multiple errors in their theory, yet suggests that communitarians might give a better account of themselves,

...to help the rest of us...understand what they 'really' want to say.  

It seems apparent that resolution of the practical problems and complex values issues that confront modern American society will require increased reflection, dialogue, and action on the part of citizens and government to discover the true "common good" that can preserve peace, secure

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\(^{10}\) Holmes cites the fascist antecedents of communitarianism among the "...twenty fundamental fallacies..of antiliberalism", pp.228-9, 253.
liberty, and foster prosperity for the greatest number of Americans.

In comparison to communitarian views, the second chapter of this paper discusses the concept of obligation in John Locke's political theory as found in The Second Treatise of Government, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding and A Letter Concerning Toleration. The conclusion discusses possible uses of concepts in Locke's Letter Concerning Toleration, and Some Thoughts Concerning Education to renew the bond between the individual and community. This examination is not intended to be exhaustive but will focus on selected portions of Locke's works in support of the discussion.
Chapter One. Communitarian Critiques of the American Articulation of John Locke's Political Theory.

Since America became independent from Great Britain over two hundred years ago our republic's unequaled body of individual liberties has proven vital in forming a progressive society which has offered opportunity for security and prosperity to the majority of citizens. Individuals have been "free" to work toward their chosen goals.\textsuperscript{11} But over time, say communitarians including Bellah and his coauthors, American society has evolved into a collection of isolated individuals and the political, social, and economic benefits of American life are threatened by that circumstance.

While many citizens and groups have benefitted materially during the United States' economic and social evolution from the colonial era to the twentieth century, contemporary U.S. society is replete with ominous defects: racial strife; poverty; crime-ridden streets in decaying cities as well as in middle-class suburbs; society-wide diminished educational standards; the fading of traditional family life and its stabilizing social effect; and civic

\textsuperscript{11}Good Society, p.80. That is, citizens were free to pursue such goals "...always provided that they had the competence to take advantage of those rights."
apathy and loss of community feeling within and between every class of U.S. society. While opportunities recede for those at the bottom of the social ladder to better their condition, citizens of the middle class appear also to be troubled even despite their relatively easy access to the abundant material goods of American society. The increasingly vast social distance between the "haves" and the "have-nots" of American society, the perception by middle-class taxpayers that they shoulder disproportionate social-economic burdens and the ever-diminishing quality of public discourse on societal priorities, stifle or prevent reasonable dialogue about common goals and values and offer an alarming prospect of broad political, economic, and social decline in future American society.\textsuperscript{12}

Bellah et al suggest that,

\begin{quote}
..the source of Americans' declining interest in democratic participation and social justice is not their affluence but their new sense of its fragility..
\end{quote}

Further, quoting Benjamin Friedman in \textit{Good Society} the authors write,

\begin{quote}
..as long as our income doubled every generation, we could afford to concern ourselves with those who had not yet come to share in the general affluence.
\end{quote}

However, Bellah et al assert,

\begin{quote}
Once that is no longer the case, we resent the use of
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{12}Habits, pp.180-181.
public funds for common provision...Success in a culture of economic opportunity is anxious and problematic, but failure is devastating. Hopelessness and despair can be profoundly self-destructive (drugs, alcohol, suicide), profoundly antisocial (vandalism, crime). To have a hostile and disaffected minority is not a happy situation for any society. Yet it is precisely our Lockean individualism that has tempted the United States...to abandon concern for those unable to take advantage of economic opportunity.

Beyond considering the evidence of decline, the first, most difficult questions American society faces as a whole are: how to judge which of our problems are most pressing, how to stem ongoing social injuries, and how, as a society, we can reach consensus on long term solutions and preventive measures for future problems.

In examining the U.S. social condition, there are a good many critics who consider that bare individual rights, in many spheres of American society, have been guaranteed in abundance and often with little apparent consideration of the need for reciprocal responsibilities on the part of citizens. Such guarantees without cost, many believe, are a root cause of apparent U.S. social decline. Among such Americans are a group known as "communitarians". Here is how a reporter described a gathering of communitarians who held a 'teach-in' on Capitol Hill in 1991,

They aren't a political party. They are a loose alliance of academicians and social thinkers who believe there should be a political discourse grounded less on the language of rights and entitlements, and more on the language of responsibilities and
obligations...Communitarians run the political gamut from liberal to neo-conservative, and -in part to keep peace in the family- they made it clear yesterday they are less interested in offering specific policy proposals than in encouraging a shift in public opinion away from the 'free lunch' mentality of the 1980s.\textsuperscript{13}

Some adherents of a communitarian political view specifically fault "Lockean individualism" in great part for splintering American society into a mass of isolated souls each concerned primarily with his or her own personal affairs.\textsuperscript{14} Among these are sociologist Robert Bellah and his coauthors who maintain that the substance of American life, both public and private, is flawed on several essential grounds. On this they write,

\begin{quote}
In our great desire to free the individual for happiness, we Americans have tried to make a social world that would serve the self...We have made instead a world that dwarfs the self it was meant to serve. Especially in the economic realm..the key to this enigma is the appealing but treacherous notion that we can create a good life simply by striving for individual comfort and security, and that by so doing we are indirectly enriching the lives of those around us...Economic opportunity is not necessarily, but is easily, equated with blaming the losers-it's their own fault if they don't have a job, money, and property.\textsuperscript{15}
\end{quote}

Bellah and one of his coauthors, William Sullivan, are


\textsuperscript{14}\textit{Habits}, pp.80, 143-4.

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{Good Society}, pp.85-7.
signatories of the "Responsive Communitarian Platform" which was released at the 1991 "teach-in" on Capitol Hill with fifty-eight signatories from across the political spectrum.\textsuperscript{16} In \textit{Good Society} the authors affirm their communitarian tenor,

If philosophical liberals are those who believe that all our problems can be solved by autonomous individuals, a market economy, and a procedural state, whereas communitarians believe that more substantive ethical identities and a more active participation in a democratic polity are necessary for the functioning of any decent society, then we are indeed communitarians. But we feel that the word 'communitarian' runs the risk of being misunderstood if one imagines that only face-to-face groups -families, congregations, neighborhoods- are communities and that communitarians are opposed to the state, the economy, and all the larger structures that so largely dominate our life today. Indeed, it is our sense that only greater citizen participation in the large structures of the economy and the state will enable us to surmount the deepening problems of contemporary social life.\textsuperscript{17}

In \textit{Habits of the Heart} and \textit{Good Society} the authors describe several related and critical flaws in American society. First, the connection between individuals and society has become so skewed in the support of individual "rights" (especially the "right" to be left alone\textsuperscript{18}) that American society is becoming an aggregate of "atomized"

\textsuperscript{16} The complete text of "The Responsive Communitarian Platform" can be found in \textit{The Responsive Community: Rights and Responsibilities}, 2:1, Winter 1991/92, pp.4-20.

\textsuperscript{17}\textit{Good Society}, p.6.

\textsuperscript{18}\textit{Good Society}, p.9.
individuals, living in disquieting license, rather than a community of citizens wisely exercising and fortifying the liberty our nation's founders achieved. The authors recount that,

Modern individualism has pursued individual rights and individual autonomy in ever new realms. In so doing, it has come into confrontation with those aspects of biblical and republican thought that accepted, even enshrined, unequal rights and obligations—between husbands and wives, masters and servants, leaders and followers, rich and poor. As the absolute commitment to individual dignity has condemned those inequalities, it has also seemed to invalidate the biblical and republican traditions. In undermining these traditions, as Tocqueville warned, individualism also weakens the very meanings that give content and substance to the ideal of individual dignity. 19

In addition, institutions that should operate to counter "atomization" by serving as foundations for alliance of public and private life in American society have strayed from or never found their appropriate missions. For example, in commenting on contemporary American "Marriage and Mores" the authors assert,

..that the family is no longer an integral part of a large moral ecology tying the individual to community, church, and nation. The family is the core of the private sphere, whose aim is not to link individuals to the public world but to avoid it as far as possible. In our commercial culture, consumerism, with its temptations, and television, with its examples, augment that tendency. Thus the tendency of our individualism to dispose 'each citizen to isolate himself from the mass of his fellows and withdraw into the circle of family and friends,' that so worried Tocqueville,

19Habits, p.144.
indeed seems to be coming true. 'Taking care of one's own' is an admirable motive. But when it combines with suspicion of, and withdrawal from, the public world, it is one of the conditions of the despotism Tocqueville feared. 

Further, the citizenry which should be controlling or influencing the institutions on which our common life is based, have renounced that responsibility in exchange for private pleasures. Bellah et al write that the complexity of modern American life and "the individualistic assumptions of our culture" have led citizens,

..to believe that we can live as we choose, using the big institutions—the agencies of the state—the organizations we work for, the schools we attend—for our own ends, without being fundamentally influenced by them..to allow the operations of government and the economy to go on 'over our heads,' as though we had nothing to do with them..to abandon just the democratic impulse that much of the rest of the world has admired in the United States. 

Habits of the Heart grew out of the authors' effort to examine contemporary U.S. society against Alexis de Tocqueville's observations of America in his eighteenth-century work, Democracy in America. Habits is based upon several hundred research interviews that Bellah and his coauthors conducted with middle class Americans. The authors' aim in these exchanges was to discover,

..how to preserve or create a morally coherent

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20Habits, p.112.

21Good Society, pp.19-20.
life... We wanted to know what resources Americans have for making sense of their lives, how they think about themselves and their society, and how their ideas relate to their actions.

In other words, Bellah et al were taking the philosophical pulse of America to find out what ails the society.\(^{22}\)

A fundamental theme of the authors in *Habits* is that once customary public "languages", that is behaviors and modes of moral discourse, of the biblical and classical republican traditions in the U.S. have largely been replaced. Those modes, the authors say, have been largely supplanted, first by "Lockean" utilitarian individualism, a view of human society,

..that takes as given certain basic human appetites and fears..

In a "Lockean" sense utilitarian individualists see society,

..as arising from a contract that individuals enter into only in order to advance their self-interest.\(^{23}\)

The historical figure Bellah et al choose to illustrate utilitarian individualism is the famously prudent and rational Benjamin Franklin.

Expressive individualism, a later modern antithesis to the utilitarian form, emphasizes each person's,

..unique core of feeling and intuition that should..be expressed if individuality is to be realized.

\(^{22}\) *Habits*, pp. vi-ix, *Good Society*, pp. 5-6.

\(^{23}\) *Habits*, p. 336.
Bellah et al liken this mode to eighteenth and nineteenth century romanticism, offering Walt Whitman as a model of this vivid self expression; and the analogue, "In the twentieth century..[is] the culture of psychotherapy."\textsuperscript{24}

As examples of the two older traditions the authors point first to John Winthrop, first governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony as a representative of the biblical tradition whose Puritan,

\ldots fundamental criterion of success was not material wealth but the creation of a community in which a genuinely ethical and spiritual life could be lived.

Among the Founders of the American republic, the authors cite Thomas Jefferson as one example of the republican tradition in America which they say,

presupposes that the citizens of a republic are motivated by civic virtue as well as self-interest..views public participation as a form of moral education and sees its purposes as the attainment of justice and the public good.\textsuperscript{25}

Bellah et al maintain that the two older traditions must be restored to better the moral discourse of society.\textsuperscript{26}

\textit{The Good Society}, the follow-up volume to \textit{Habits}, focuses on institutions in American life and characterizes as faltering, the authority of such American institutions

\textsuperscript{24}Ibid., pp.333-4.

\textsuperscript{25}Ibid., pp.30-1,335.

\textsuperscript{26}Ibid., pp.27-35.
as: the workplace, family, market economy, government, legal system and religions. Each, the authors assert, has stumbled in sustaining its important purpose of bonding individuals in community to achieve decent social goals. Similarly, the authors describe a parallel default by citizens in not attending to their societal institutions' inadequacies and not striving to correct and redefine those institutions' behaviors, functions, and goals. Bellah et al describe American citizens' retreat into private life and negligence of societal institutions saying,

In short, we are not self-created atoms manipulating or being manipulated by objective institutions. We form institutions and they form us every time we engage in a conversation that matters, and certainly every time we act as a parent or child, student or teacher, citizen or official, in each case calling on models and metaphors for the rightness and wrongness of action. Institutions are not only constraining but enabling. They are the substantial forms through which we understand our own identity and the identity of others as we seek cooperatively to achieve a decent society.

The idea that institutions are objective mechanisms that are essentially separate from the lives of the individuals who inhabit them is an ideology that exacts a high moral and political price. The classical liberal view has elevated one virtue, autonomy, as almost the only good, but has failed to recognize that even autonomy depends on a particular kind of institutional structure and is not an escape from institutions altogether. By imagining a world in which individuals can be autonomous not only from institutions but from each other, it has forgotten that autonomy, valuable as it is in itself, is only one virtue among others and that without such virtues as responsibility and care, which can be exercised only through institutions, autonomy itself becomes, as we argued in Habits of the Heart, an empty form without
substance.27

In Habits the authors recount the irony that the license as liberty in which many Americans indulge is so far from fulfilling that individuals are disconnected from one another and from the community and we also lack authentic knowledge of our own motivations, values, and genuine need for human community as social creatures.28

Bellah et al make it clear that their position that the phenomenon of civic apathy29 is not a sudden development in recent years but an outgrowth of a long-standing American self-perception of individual citizens as totally autonomous, choosing when they wish to attend to their community or not. In a chapter of Habits entitled "Getting Involved" the authors write:

'What would you want me to tell my students about how to fulfill their responsibilities as citizens?' one of us used to ask at the conclusion of his interviews with community leaders. Almost always the characteristically American answer was 'Tell them to get involved!' The United States is a nation of joiners...Implicit in this

27Good Society, p.12, emphasis added.


29The singularly large voter turnout in the 1992 national election might be viewed as serious citizen response to general unease at discord in U.S. society, the level of national debt, and seeming lack of accountability on the part of the incumbent President and members of Congress. Alternatively, it might be seen as a transient attendance by citizens to public issues, a concern which will recede as the election campaign fades in memory.
prenchant for 'getting involved' is the peculiarly American notion of the relationship between self and society. Individuals are expected to get involved—to choose for themselves to join social groups. They are not automatically involved in social relationships that impose obligations not of their choosing, and social institutions that are not the product of the voluntary choice of the individuals who constitute them are perceived as illegitimate. Most people say they get involved in social institutions to achieve their self-interests or because they feel an affinity with certain others. Given such assumptions about the purposes of involvement, what kind of vision can one have of the public good? What would lead such individuals to sacrifice their self-interests to the public good and consciously link their destinies to those of their ancestors, contemporaries, and descendants?\textsuperscript{30}

In \textit{Habits} Bellah et al describe contemporary American citizens as involved chiefly in "private" concerns, including even citizens who might be considered "community activists" and whose avocations or occupations can broadly be characterized as beneficial to the common good.\textsuperscript{31} As to the "common good", the authors assert in \textit{Good Society} that contemporary Americans' understanding of the ends of human society is flawed so that we know neither what we want nor what we need,\textsuperscript{32} as individuals or as a society.

Yet, it is questionable whether Americans' conception of the common good has so much become flawed as that American society has developed much along the political and

\textsuperscript{30}\textit{Habits}, p.167.

\textsuperscript{31}\textit{Ibid}, pp. 181-186.

\textsuperscript{32}\textit{Good Society}, p.291.
social course that the Framers' structure of the U.S. constitution made inevitable. The American republic was not planned to be a direct democracy with constant "hands on" involvement by a majority of citizens but as a commercial society with a representative democratic legislature, limited government oversight in citizens' lives, and minimal obligation to society on the part of citizens. As a result, contemporary Americans much accustomed to predominantly "private" lives centered on business and family recoil from the expanding complexity of government functions and from profound social troubles which seem to surpass society's capacity to envision solutions.

On this score Bellah and his coauthors write,

One way of summing up the difficulty Americans have in understanding the fundamental roots of their problems is to say that they still have a Lockean political culture, emphasizing freedom and the pursuit of individual affluence...in a society with a most un-Lockean economy and government. We have the illusion that we can control our fate because individual economic opportunity is indeed considerable, especially if one starts with middle class advantages; and our political life is formally free.  

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34Good Society, p.79. In further explanation of modern Americans' retreat from public life Bellah et al write, "The Lockean ideal of the autonomous individual was, in the eighteenth century, embedded in a complex moral ecology that included family and church on the one hand and on the other a vigorous public sphere in which economic initiative, it was hoped, grew together with public spirit. Without
Over the last two centuries American citizens' "inattention" to society and its institutions developed in conjunction with "Lockean individualism", each behavior engendering the other. Inasmuch as historically "planned" inattention to government has allowed vigorous individualism to flourish and the benefits of private life have captured the attention of most citizens, Americans have overlooked or not comprehended the structural need of society for individuals to act together periodically in order to keep the whole society vital and coherent. The understandable inattention by citizens has become an ever greater liability to U.S. society as a whole as the problems it faces become increasingly complex.

That is the problematic condition of American society which disturbs communitarians. The next chapter will attempt to discover the roots of this issue in John Locke's concept of obligation.

overlooking its many injustices, we may note that it was still a society that operated on a humanly intelligible scale." Good Society, p.265.
Chapter Two. Obligation in John Locke's Political Theory

John Locke's concept of individual obligation offers insight into the modern notion of individualism, as well as into the claims of its contemporary critics. Indeed, the Framers of the U.S. constitution assimilated into that document the concepts of individual liberty, natural equality, and government by consent of the governed which John Locke espoused in his Second Treatise of Government. Locke's works do not contain a inclusive description of reciprocal obligation between individuals and government. However, in The Second Treatise there are several premises concerning natural law, the state of nature, human nature and human interests, which serve to outline Locke's view of obligation. Those premises present an implicit contrast between liberal and communitarian views of man's relation to civil society and the concept of obligation.

In his political thought Locke was concerned with the preservation of individual citizens' lives, liberty, and property from the grasping hands of the English monarchy and its supporters. Locke's life and career spanned the reign of several English kings and his thought was influenced by the political and religious controversies and tumult in England under those monarchs. Locke served as an aid and
confidant to the Earl of Shaftesbury, a politically changeable, astute, and often controversial figure. Commentator Richard Ashcraft affirms that Locke's political theory was animated by his historical milieu and association with Shaftesbury,

Locke's writings did not emerge from the environment of the detached philosopher...Rather...[they] arose out of the political turmoil that surrounded him as the trusted adviser to the most important opposition politician in Restoration England.\(^\text{35}\)

Religious liberty was a concern which for Locke entwined with the political conflicts of his age and he treated that subject forcefully in A Letter Concerning Toleration. The Letter was an argument against government-sanctioned political abuses by a majority or politically dominant religious community, against politically powerless religious minorities and dissenters. Locke matured during Catholic King James II's reign. He witnessed obvious instances of and attempts at religious-inspired political abuses by the King and his supporters, and wrote the Letter in response.

Locke wrote his most renowned works of political philosophy, Two Treatises of Government in opposition to a

revival by royalist-sympathetic clerics under James II of Robert Filmer's Patriarcha which asserted extensive support in Christian Scripture for the "divine right of kings." Locke published his Treatises anonymously within a year following the Glorious Revolution when James II was replaced on the throne by his daughter Mary and her Protestant husband, William of Orange. Peter Laslett infers from textual study that the Two Treatises were written as a unit over some years during this period and not, as publication dates might indicate, in the year following the Glorious Revolution as a tribute to that "bloodless" revolution.\(^3^6\) Locke intended by his Second Treatise that the reader might "understand political power right." His scheme in this work describes the origins and "Ends of Political Society and Government" as well as the limits that should curb government's power and protect man's property.\(^3^7\)

Locke's account of the concept of obligation can be

\(^{3^6}\)Laslett, pp. 36, 45-47; Ashcraft, pp.75-6. The Preface to The Second Treatise refers to Locke's desire that his treatise may be, ..sufficient to establish the throne of our great restorer, our present King William.. Though scholars cannot prove absolutely that the favorable preface was added to the previously written manuscript at the time of publication, that conclusion seems likely.

\(^{3^7}\)Locke defines "property" broadly as, ..lives, liberties and estates, which I call by the general name property. (§123)
found initially as a precept of natural law in the state of nature. By obligation in this context is meant a duty ordained by natural law and discoverable by man through reason and experience. Natural law is not divine, not revealed to man by God, nor does it reside in men's minds by nature. Locke considered the human mind to be without innate ideas prior to experience, and followed by man's reasoning, reflective judgement of the experience. Nor, according to Locke, does man have innate ideas of moral principle, or virtue.\footnote{John Locke, \textit{An Essay Concerning Human Understanding}, vol. 1, ed. John W. Yolton, ed., London: J.M. Dent & Sons, Ltd, 1961, I:II,15,p.15, I:III, pp.26-8.} Yet, natural law does preexist mankind, authored by God, and must be discovered by human beings through the use of their natural ability to reason about experience.

Locke's conception of natural law rests on the foundation of his understanding of human nature, natural rights and interests. Locke's natural law contrasts permanent, rational human interests, that is preservation of individual "property", against utilitarian interests that change according to current fashion. According to Locke's \textit{Essays on Natural Law} it is natural law with its inherent endowments and obligations and not utilitarian self-interest that is the foundation for human interaction both in the
state of nature and later under civil government. On this Locke writes,

There are some who in their attack on natural law have adopted the following argument: 'It is on the basis of utility that men have laid down for themselves legal codes varying in accordance with their manners and customs, and often changed with changing times among the same people; there is, however, no law of nature, for all men as well as other living creatures are driven by innate impulse to seek their own interests; and there is likewise no such thing as a natural law of justice, or, if it exists, it is the height of folly, inasmuch as to be mindful of the advantages of others is to do harm to oneself'...This most harmful opinion has, however, always been opposed by the more rational part of men, in whom there was some sense of a common humanity, some concern for fellowship.  

Locke establishes his argument for individual liberty within legitimate government on a foundation of the requirements of natural law and man's condition in the state of nature. Locke's state of nature is an ahistorical construct which he devised to show that men form governments by mutual consent to secure their lives and property. In an early section of Second Treatise, Locke begins by describing the state of nature, antedating civil government, as the,


40This conception contrasts with the state of nature Thomas Hobbes devised to argue for government by absolute sovereign in Leviathan, I:13.
..state all men are naturally in...a state of perfect freedom to order their actions, and dispose of their possessions and persons, as they think fit, within the bounds of the law of nature, without asking leave, or depending upon the will of any other man.

Locke writes further that man's condition in the state of nature is,

A state also of equality, wherein all the power and jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another; there being nothing more evident, than that creatures of the same species and rank, promiscuously born to all the same advantages of nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without subordination or subjection..($4)

Yet, although men are perfectly free and equal in the state of nature, according to the law of nature which obtains there, men have neither the right to destroy themselves nor to harm other men. Locke writes that,

..though this be a state of liberty...it is not a state of licence: though man in that state have an uncontrollable liberty to dispose of his person and possessions, yet he has not liberty to destroy himself...The state of nature has a law of nature to govern it, which obliges every one: and reason, which is that law, teaches all mankind, who will but consult it, that being all equal and independent, no one ought to harm another in his life, health, liberty, or possessions..

The law of nature, which man discovers by use of his reason, if he "will but consult it", discloses man's chief and perpetual obligation: to preserve himself, and,

..when his own preservation comes not in competition..to preserve the rest of mankind..($6)
But circumstances in the state of nature make self preservation, much less preservation of others, a difficult task. For one thing, human nature is variable according to whether or how well individual men understand and obey the law of nature. Some men in the state of nature are "industrious and rational". They use their labor to take raw resources from the commonly held earth and create property for themselves, yet still leave "enough and as good" of the resources for others. Other men are "quarrelsome and contentious" and, rather than labor to create their own property, steal that of others and threaten their lives. (§34) In the state of nature there is "no authority to decide" disputes among men, so among all men "every the least difference" is likely to erupt into a state of war. In this instance the state of nature develops into the state of war where arbitrary punishments are meted out erratically by men partial to their own claim or those of their friends.

This points toward the three major "inconveniences" of the state of nature that prod men to form civil governments among themselves. The first is the want of an "established, settled, known law" in the sense that there is no convention in the state of nature to make the law of nature known to
and obeyed by all men. In addition, since all men are perfectly free and equal, there is no unbiased one among them who can fairly judge the lawfulness of mens' actions. The final "inconveniencie" is that of execution of the law of nature. Since all men are equal, each is equally the "executioner" of the law. This presents the same problem of bias as does judging but also adds the hazard of immoderate punishment if the "executioner" so chooses,

...every one has a right to punish the transgressors of that law to such a degree, as may hinder its violation..($7)

The uncertainties of the state of nature cause men to be "driven into society", and of this Locke writes,

...notwithstanding all the privileges of the state of nature..Hence it comes to pass that we seldom find any number of men live any time together in this state. The inconveniencies that they are therein exposed to, by the irregular and uncertain exercise of the power every man has of punishing the transgressions of others, make them take sanctuary under the established laws of government, and therein seek the preservation of their property.

Rational men in Locke's state of nature do not form civil societies to enjoy companionship\(^4\) nor in order to gain property. Men can find both of these benefits in the state of nature. The impetus toward civil society is

\(^4\)Locke does give slight mention to "the love and want of society" as a contributing reason that men gather together but in context this appears still to predate government($101)$
preservation of their property, which includes life and liberty, and about which Locke writes,

It is this makes them so willingly give up every one his single power of punishing, to be exercised by such alone, as shall be appointed to it amongst them; and by such rules as the community, or those authorized by them to that purpose, shall agree on. And in this we have the original right and rise of both the legislative and executive power, as well as of the governments and societies themselves.(§127)

Within civil society Locke focuses on obligation as that of the government to fulfill the charge for which it was created: to enforce natural law by protecting the lives, property, and liberty of the citizens who created the society by their mutual consent.

The individual's obligations within society as presented in the Second Treatise are narrow. Foremost is the obligation to comply with "standing laws" of society, again, those laws based upon the laws of nature but augmented by positive civil law in matters not governed by natural law. But ultimately, Locke asserts clearly, rational man's core reason for joining together in society when he writes,

..though men, when they enter into society, give up the equality, liberty, and executive power they had in the state of nature, into the hands of the society, to be so far disposed of by the legislative, as the good of the society shall require; yet it being only with an intention in every one the better to preserve himself, his liberty and property; (for no rational creature can be supposed to change his condition with an intention to be worse) the power of the society, or legislative
constituted by them, can never be supposed to extend farther, than the common good.

which common good Locke defines as the government being,

.. obliged to secure everyone's property, by providing against those three defects..that made the state of nature so unsafe and uneasy($131)

As we have seen, according to Locke's political theory men form governments by mutual consent to preserve themselves. Within civil society government administers "settled" law, unbiased judges, and impartial executors of justice, to ameliorate the three critical inconveniences of the state of nature. Since lawful civil government arises out of man's rational understanding of his natural interest, that is the preservation of his "property", it would be irrational for a man willingly to oblige himself to live under a government that apparently does not secure his interest.

Locke acknowledges that man's natural liberty must be reduced somewhat by legitimate government, otherwise civil society will not stay together. Men in society are obliged to obey the settled law and to submit to just punishment when they break the law. They give up the total liberty of the state of nature and their equal right to judge and punish one another. Yet, they give up only as much of their natural liberty as is necessary to secure the common good.

Locke's political theory treats men as capable of both
upright and base actions, according to their relative mastery at reasoning about their experience and grasping and obeying natural law. But despotic coercion, beyond the plain requirements of the common good, even though it be toward virtuous behavior, is indefensible to Locke. However, persuasion toward virtue, without the force of civil law behind it, is reasonable to Locke.

Although Locke's political theory does not preclude virtuous civic behavior, the Second Treatise does not list specific human virtues that Locke considers worth attaining. Yet, some virtues, of a practical or prudential sort, can be inferred from Locke's description of the state of nature and implications of human nature. Among those prudential human virtues are: an aptitude for rational thought, for reasonable behavior, for honesty and industry in labor, and concern for preservation of self, and the preservation of others, again, when it does not threaten one's own well-being. In Locke's Education for Liberty Nathan Tarcov poses the question,

...whether Lockean politics... are self-sustaining. If the character of a people changes, then liberal institutions may no longer suit them; and since liberal institutions are not primarily character-forming, they seem to provide no guarantee against this eventuality or remedy for it if it does occur. ⁴²

Tarcov's question echoes the doubt which communitarians cast upon liberal "Lockean individualism" in the contemporary U.S. Given the communitarian challenge, and the framework of Locke's concept of individual obligation, we may next consider whether some segments of Lockean theory might have a positive effect on human virtue. That is, the sort of virtue, or obligation, that supports community, yet does not oppress individuals.
Conclusion: What Remedy Might Renew the Bond Between Individuals and Community Yet Not Imperil Liberty?

The final consideration for this paper is what remedy might be found in Locke's works to ease modern American society's apparent imbalance of strong individualism against weak civic obligation. The question may be asked whether it is appropriate to seek help from the presumed source of our "disorder" of excessive individualism. The "contractual" language in the preceding passage from Second Treatise is the kind of articulation that, for communitarians, marks Locke's political theory as atomistically individualistic. In that passage Locke refers to the common good and gives a persuasive portrait of civilized society, even closing with the admonition that government's actions,

..be directed to no other end but the peace, safety, and public good of the people.

Yet, Locke reminds the reader, that man enters into society "every one" only "the better to preserve himself."(§131)

Unquestionably Americans cannot wholly connect their nation's social problems to the Framers' use of Locke's political theory. It seems likely that so called "Lockean individualism," that strong individualism which has developed most fully in the American republic, in practice results from a mistakenly fragmentary application of Locke's
theory. What has been left out is the necessity of virtuous, educated, civic-minded citizens without which no democracy will long survive. It is implausible that Locke expected civil society to function without a basis in at least prudential virtue of the sort discussed in Some Thoughts Concerning Education. In their introduction to Locke's Education John and Jean Yolton examine Locke's notion of moral education and contend that,

..his concern with the moral education of the child has a clear social backing. His concern with this aspect of education was not only motivated by a conviction that virtue is important for gentlemen; it also had the deeper and far more dynamic motive that virtue was the very fabric and basis for humanity. Man's humanity is achieved within civil society.43

Locke's liberal theory furnishes a likely source of remedies for U.S. social ills, as was asserted in the introduction to this paper, because the universal scope of liberalism's "common good," justice, is more pluralistic than the particularity of communitarian ambition toward civic virtue. If civic virtue were made "compulsory" who, in a democracy, would choose which virtues citizens must attain? Would those citizens who resist the obligation to

be civically virtuous be driven perforce by their resistance into Locke’s state of nature?

Although observers from some political factions might disagree, the evidence of widespread social problems and decline in the United States challenge Americans to a new public dialogue on reciprocal individual rights and obligations in society. Thoughtful Americans may consider that a misapplication of Locke’s political thought (so-called “Lockean individualism”) might properly be cured by a more thorough examination of Locke’s conception of human nature and civil society. American citizens and government together might forge a revised social contract that holds an explicit vision of the common good; one which persuasively promotes public policy that treats both the common good and that of the individual citizen as fundamental to the endurance of the American republic.

Given these considerations, can Locke’s works answer to this issue? Can the U.S. government under the leadership of the President, actively exhort and encourage civic virtue in citizens in our modern liberal democracy? Should greater civic virtue be promoted by government or could that be perceived as coercion and be likely to do more injury than good to our democracy? Can heartening rhetoric, much more than governmental regulation, be the key to persuading
citizens toward greater interest in the public life of U.S. society? And, can such rhetoric succeed with a devitalized citizenry? I propose in this chapter to suggest elements of Locke's political theory that might support persuasion, not to say coercion, by the President of the United States of American citizens in the practice of civic virtue, what Bellah and his coauthors would call "attention", to promote the greatest good for the greatest number of citizens.

Locke wrote that human beings are moved more by unease than by pleasure.44 Since, in the view not only of communitarians but of other commentators across the political spectrum, this is a period of increasing unease in American society, that factor may serve to focus the citizenry and government on social problems and support an ongoing active dialogue for solutions. Perhaps American society requires a kind of informal enlightenment of citizens in the necessity and forms of civic virtue to manage public life in a modern liberal democracy.

44John Locke, An Essay Concerning Human Understanding, in two volumes, ed. John W. Yolton, London: J.M. Dent & Sons Ltd, 1961, vol. one, In II:vii,2,p.999, Locke writes: Delight or uneasiness, one or other of them, join themselves to almost all our ideas both of sensation and reflection...

II:xxi, p.206: Locke writes, "The motive for continuing in the same state or action is only the present satisfaction in it; the motive to change is always some uneasiness: nothing setting us upon the change of state, or upon any new action, except some uneasiness. This is the great motive that works on the mind to put it upon action...determining the will..."
A case can be made for persuasive education by Locke's "executive", in this case by the U.S. President of citizens, in habits of civic virtue appropriate to the current era and circumstances. Such persuasion from the "bully pulpit", here defined as the President's platform for energetic political leadership using example and rhetoric with moral overtones, can demonstrate that what leaders do and say does matter and can influence the citizenry toward civic virtue. This would be leadership by persuasion, without the coercive power of force. The credibility of the "bully pulpit" is a complex mixture of several elements: the personal attributes of the leader, features of the specific instance of persuasion, the community which is being addressed, and the contemporary political, social, and other circumstances of the community.

For example, negative press and public reactions to Ronald Reagan were uncommon during his Presidency, yet his official visit to a Nazi Cemetery in Germany drew a good deal of public criticism. In that episode during Reagan's presidency, the ostensible "bully pulpit" purpose of the visit was to end lingering animosities from World War II, yet the President's personal popularity was outweighed by the American public's long-standing disgust toward Nazis.

The proof of the outcome in an attempt to persuade
citizens may be in the level of political and public support demonstrated. And perhaps sometimes, in the level or lack of public outcry. George Bush's visit, during the 1988 Presidential campaign, to a factory that produced American flags enjoyed much media coverage, and persuaded many Americans of the depth of the candidate's patriotism. Yet, Bush's permitting his supporters to use the "Willie Horton" television advertisements during the same campaign convinced other Americans of the shallowness of Bush's character.

Other examples illustrate that citizens can be persuaded by their leaders and that responsible leadership, using persuasion to further a widely recognized common good, can benefit the community as a whole. For instance, during the Clinton inauguration, African American writer Maya Angelou read her poem for the occasion standing before masses of powerful politicians and a huge audience of other Americans. Ms. Angelou's presence was a reminder to all Americans that they are one people, a national community, despite their many colors, religions, and ethnicities. It remains to be seen whether that event was persuasive in influencing public opinion and promoting civic virtue. But anecdotal evidence says that the reminder gave a good many people new hope for tolerance and community.

This method of reasonable persuasion holds no greater
guarantee of success in the present than it likely did in the past. This is, after all, politics, whether practiced with sincere desire for the common good or not. But in educating citizens it has the advantage of not tampering through legislative means with our existing system of liberties. Change in citizen attitudes and behavior would be sought simply through the influence of energetic persuasion by the President using moral exhortation and example.

This suggestion is based on Locke's several, unambiguous recommendations of exhortatory moral influence by the "magistrate" or the "executive" as well as by regular citizens to one another. Locke mentions the necessity "to provide for the public good" in *A Letter Concerning Toleration* when he writes that any citizen, including the magistrate (executive) should not hesitate to exhort fellow citizens in worthy behavior since,

Magistracy does not oblige him to put off either humanity or Christianity; but it is one thing to persuade, another to command; one thing to press with arguments, another with penalties. Every man has commission to admonish, exhort, convince another of error, and, by reasoning, to draw him into truth;

Locke continues, reaffirming that the Magistrate's,

..power extends not to the establishing of any articles of faith, or forms of worship, by the force of his laws. For laws are of no force at all without penalties, and penalties in this case are absolutely impertinent, because they are not proper to convince
the mind.\textsuperscript{45}
The Magistrate may, like any other citizen, reason with to persuade other persons toward virtuous behavior but he may not coerce with the civil power he holds.

Locke's theory of \textit{education} was directed toward training the children of eighteenth century British gentry in several civic virtues including moderation, prudence, and honesty. Locke fixed upon this class because as children of educated working men, lawyers and doctors, this group was wedged between the wealthy and the powerless poor. As adults, Locke's children of the gentry would be called upon to buttress and preserve British society and so needed training in virtue of a kind that would make them willing and competent to serve as governors of their society.

In an excerpt from her book \textit{Undemocratic Education} Amy Gutmann conveys a similar sense of the need for civic education for adults (and children) to that of John Locke in his \textit{Education}. Gutmann writes that,

\begin{quote}
For a society to be reproductive, it must institute practices of democratic deliberation and decisionmaking for its adult citizens...To shape their society, citizens and their representatives engage in collective deliberations and decisionmaking at different levels of government...a democratic state tries to teach virtue...the virtues that are necessary for a
\end{quote}

flourishing liberal democracy...veracity, nonviolence, religious toleration, mutual respect for reasonable differences of opinion, the ability to deliberate and therefore to participate in conscious social reproduction.\textsuperscript{46}

In a like manner the style of instruction found in Locke's \textit{Education} might form an approach for informally educating contemporary American adults in civic virtue and reasonable obligation to society. Such education would focus on social, political, and economic realities and on each citizen's need to consider priorities for local and national civic life. For example, consider the broad public interest garnered by candidate Ross Perot's television programs discussing the U.S. economy and the national budget deficit and debt. In addition, the Clinton televised "town hall" meetings apparently are causing many Americans to pay attention to public policy as they have not done for a decade or more. This is an important aim because it may be the surest positive way to bring Americans to grips with reality and create voter support for national policy changes that will prevent further social and economic deterioration

\textsuperscript{46}Amy Gutmann, \textit{Undemocratic Education in Liberalism and the Moral Life}, ed. Nancy L. Rosenblum, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989, pp.71-87, p.79. As mentioned earlier, Dr. Gutmann has written critically of communitarian theory, yet she advocates some measures for education in virtue that communitarians might advocate as well.
and improve living conditions for the greatest number of citizens.

This approach is akin to that apparently already being used by the recently elected American President. Although the Clinton Administration's undertaking in indirect education of the public has many prominent detractors, it is surely the most pronounced effort in some years by national government to inform citizens of particular national problems. The Administration's evident intent is to form a political consensus broader than that of aggrieved, middle class taxpayers in order to design national policy to further the President's particular vision of the common good.

In effect our modern, liberal society can educate itself in civic obligation and political participation through the efforts of the elected "executive," the President. In this way citizens may examine political problems, seek consensus for solutions together with government, and not simply insist obtusely and arbitrarily on some indistinct level of accountability in government. Realistically, for this sort of dialogue and consensus building to occur the President must be highly skilled as a politician and, if the society is fortunate, must be an intelligent, thoughtful, and principled leader.
Such education might be accomplished through political discourse fostered by the U.S. President, Locke's "executive", who would lead citizens by persuasion rather than active coercion. By public example, the President and by the executive branch of government can lead with intelligent effort and a willingness to risk public and partisan political scorn, while both courting and goading citizens into good faith behavior. This can be done even if citizens do not immediately agree with some specifics of the executive's goals. But what of the danger of coercion of citizens by an opportunist President or a totalitarian government? If the citizens abhor the President's actions they can "revolt" using the ballot. Should some acts of Presidential "prerogative" prove wholly unpopular, the U.S. Constitution provides relief even up to impeachment. There is a danger of a president playing to an tyrannous majority and abusing minorities. Yet this also could be checked by the ballot or even prevented by a civically educated citizenry paying "attention" to institutions and public life.

If, finally, American citizens are not moved beyond the social and moral stalemate of recent decades can American

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47Second Treatise, §§158,164,166.

48Bellah, Good Society, pp.254-286.
democracy hope to endure? The remedies discussed have the advantage of being non-coercive of liberty and of respecting a "public good" fairer than the particular communitarian virtue of civic obligation, that is, justice.

The art required to secure liberty, ensure justice, and sustain community is genuine political leadership. In the realization of public dialogue and education, leadership, albeit of a rare, extraordinarily charismatic and principled sort, may answer to nourish the bond between individuals and community and correct the balance of Americans' social rights and responsibilities. Whether the U.S. has that sort of leadership, or something approaching it, remains to be seen.