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Citation: Rojek, C. (2022). John Locke, Private Property and the Birth of Achieved Celebrity. *Cultural Sociology*, 16(4), pp. 548-562. doi: 10.1177/17499755211051835

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Link to published version: <https://doi.org/10.1177/17499755211051835>

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JOHN LOCKE, PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE BIRTH OF ACHIEVED CELEBRITY

Abstract

This paper argues that John Locke's defence of Natural Rights and private property are prerequisites in the rise of achieved celebrity. It addresses how the rights of private property are anterior to taking 'the ordinary citizen' as an object of attention capital.

The path taken here will be to set forth the case that the emergence of the interests of private property in England, in the mid to late 17th century, was an indispensable precondition for the rise of achieved celebrity. [It goes without saying that the term 'achieved celebrity' would have meant nothing to Locke. Today, in the study of celebrity the term is associated with the distinction between Ascribed and Achieved Celebrity \(Rojek](#)

2001). Briefly, *Ascribed Celebrity* refers to the decantation of fame by virtue of privileged genealogy or occupancy of constitutional position. The children of a Monarch or the elected representative of the highest office of the land are finally famous by virtue of blood or the ballot box. *Achieved Celebrity* is a matter of acquiring fame by reason of talent, accomplishment and/or the unregulated social engineering of Cultural Intermediaires and the Media (Rojek 2001). Because these categorical post-Lockian concerns have minimal bearing upon his defence of property and its implications for surpassing hierarchy and tradition, they will simply be referenced in this paper. Anyone who understands the argument that is about to unfold will quickly see that Locke unintentionally lit the powder keg to the *distract* of Ascribed Celebrity. It goes without saying that he was not alone in this. Hobbes, Rousseau, Voltaire and many others challenged the traditional rule of Church and Crown. In particular, the influence of Hobbes on Locke's thinking about 'possessive individualism' has been clearly established (Macpherson 1964). But there are good grounds to propose here that Locke, writing in the 17th century was nothing less than the hitherto unacknowledged father of what is now called *Achieved Celebrity*. Today, Locke is commonly portrayed as a forerunner of the case for universal human rights (Schouls 1992; Lamprecht 2020). This is misleading because Locke's argument is confined to a defence of male, private property rights. The rights of women and the propertyless do not figure (Stevens 2009). However, making the case that his philosophical writings are crucial, provides a useful 'pre-history' to the conventional view of historians which place the birth of celebrity in the mid 18th century (Lilti 2017). For Locke's theory of Natural Rights defence of private property falls back at every point to the espousal of freedom ultimately irrespective of gender, sexual orientation, wealth, status or any other biological or social distinction, one might care to mention. 'Property,' writes Locke, 'is from the Right of Man ... for the Subsistence and

Comfort of his Life (and) for the Advantage of the Proprietor' (Locke 1960: 209). It is not therefore an asset of the prerogative of the Monarch. It must be remembered that Locke refined his ideas in the context of profound, entrenched political unrest. His youth and majority passed in the deluge of the Civil Wars (1642-1651), and what historians now commonly call *the interregnum* i.e. the period, following the establishment of the Cromwellian protectorate, when England was ruled by various types of Republican government (1649-1660) and the *Restoration*. His middle years were passed in the reinvigorated Stuart dynasty with all of the *travails* of national religious bigotry and civil disorder that it entailed. Indeed, during this period, Locke was driven into exile to the Netherlands for fear of being arrested as an insurrectionist. He only returned with the *Glorious Revolution* (1688) (1). Locke's personality and ideas then, were formed in the midst of immense national upheaval. He witnessed the death throes of absolutist monarchy and the rise and fall of the Republican succession. In the midst of this he assembled a position on Natural Rights that challenges the authority of both monarchical and religious absolutism. *Contra* the common view, his *Two Treatises of Government* do not exactly constitute a full-blown theory of individual rights (Locke 1960; Stevens 1997). However, in laying at the door of private property what Luther had achieved for individual religious conscience, namely the right of self-determination, it made this development logically inevitable. On the question of celebrity, an unintended consequence of his thought was to lever fame from the curatorship of Court Society and the decree of the Church (Elias 1983). Needless to say, the Court Society of Locke's day did not *determine* fame. Even in the severely restricted circumstances of a Society in which fame was governed by the *entente* between the Crown and the Church it was always feasible for fame to be achieved by dint of talent and accomplishment. Having said that, Court Society overwhelmingly legitimated the

priority of the established hierarchy of Ascribed Celebrity. Locke's defence of Natural Rights and private property made the challenge of what is now called Achieved Celebrity inevitable. It made private property relations, above all the character of private personality, a new and vigorous focus of public attention that was not finally unamenable to regulation 'from above'. The *entente* between Church and Crown was consistent with the wider general texture in traditional society for exploring the vast topic of meaningful being. Despite the Christian edict in the *Gospel of Matthew*, '*blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*', meaningful being was mostly, an attribution of the religious clerisy and Court Society (Matthew 1784: 5:5). It was indissoluble from the question of *duration*. This is a complex, contradictory historical subject. However, for the sake of the concerns of this paper it may be reduced to a simple precept: what is famous, is what lasts. The Church identified renown with fitness of earthly conduct for passage to the afterlife, while the monarchy linked it with the posterity of rule. In both cases, it was taken for granted that personal value and social worth could only be ultimately reckoned in the *longue duree*. Kantorowicz's famous study of Medieval Political Theology argues that duration was so fundamental to Medieval cosmology, that the Church and Crown proposed that it is legally proper to hold that the Monarch possesses two bodies i.e. a mortal body, that ages and dies, and a socio-historical body that is transpersonal and infinite (Kantorowicz 1967). This twinned notable renown in life with potentially infinite, (Ascribed) posthumous fame. It also means that only with the death of the noteworthy person can the question of the worth of fame be conclusively settled. It might be said that a by-product of Locke's thinking was to decouple personal worth and social recognition from the scale of formalized legacy. Contingency, immediacy and ephemerality were now brought to the fore as equally tenable identifying characteristics of fame. Traditional cultures of fame that link the status with the

temporalities of decades, centuries, millenia and eternity, are now challenged with a new culture that values the worth of personal celebrity in terms of 'the moment'. To understand how this new understanding of fame emerged as an adjunct of Locke's thought, it is vital, briefly, to examine the foundation of his system of thinking. For in discounting human barriers to the enquiry of the mind, this system also dismantled restraints on the construction and expression of personality.

Empiricism

Braudy has elucidated the links between the Italian Renaissance and what is now called 'celebrity' (Braudy 1997). This is again a useful reminder that Locke should not be classified as some sort of isolated precursor of celebrity understood as a matter of individual possession, rather than the decree of the Crown or imprimatur of the Church. It also highlights what is distinctive about his contribution. Namely, his insistence on the importance of observation, experience and testing in establishing valid data and useful propositions. The logic of Locke's defence of Natural Rights and his more localized defence of the Rights of private property is that it is within the dominion of the individual to project, exchange and debate so long as it remains within the limit of the laws of the protection and serenity of the majority. Locke regards the State of Nature, by which all knowledge ultimately derives to be a condition,

wherein all the Power and Jurisdiction is reciprocal, no one having more than another: there being nothing more evident then that Creatures of the same

species and rank promiscuously born to all of the same advantages of Nature, and the use of the same faculties, should also be equal one amongst another without Subordination or Subjection (Locke 1960:269).

Locke's arguments utilize and advance the philosophy of knowledge known as Empiricism (Locke 1975). According to Empiricism, what is experienced and what has been experienced (in history and custom) is the sum of human knowledge. Note the inclusive nature of this perspective. Locke proposed that *all* experience contributes to the aggregate of human knowledge. This is because cognition and the senses are universal properties. In addition, Empiricism underwrites contingency and **immediacy and** ephemerality as unavoidable consequences of the production, exchange and distribution of knowledge. Compared with **Ascribed** forms of authority, sanctioned by religion and the monarchy, Empiricism is an innately generative and disruptive philosophy. Ultimately, it turns knowledge over to a just-in-time principle whereby, the fruits of cognition are continuously and irrevocably subject to induction and testing. **It** is quite alien to **Locke's** procedure to maintain that experience and cognition end in permanent settlement. Contingency, **immediacy** and ephemerality are the recognized order of the day. So far, this would seem to situate Locke on the side of extolling the virtue of breaking artificial boundaries on knowledge and experience and replacing them with some sort of anarchy of ideas. In fact, Empiricism has no patience with the hypothesis that liberating private property **and fame** from the external **rule of** Church and Crown must turn the enquiries of the mind over to a cognitive free for all. Locke was not interested in imposing new restraints upon what is, and what can be, empirically known. To be sure, Empiricism, as a whole, is hugely sceptical that the business of searching for eternal truths and deducing everlasting conclusions from them, has any validity whatsoever.

Despite acknowledging the omnipresence of contingency and ephemerality, Empiricism consecutively attests to provide a new footing in human affairs. That is, the philosophical and methodological means with which to differentiate credible, trustworthy, testable, knowledge from unsound, incomprehensible varieties. Locke is fully aware of the political and moral implications of this. In his words:

Reason, which is that Law, that 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 ... And being furnished with like
Faculties, sharing all in one Community of
Nature, there cannot be supposed any such
Subordination among us, that may authorize us
to destroy one another, as if we were made for
one anothers uses (Locke 1960: 171, emphasis in
original).

That readers today often find these arguments platitudinous is a measure of Locke's achievement in normalizing the perspective. The shift he made was not merely contrary to convention, it spelled danger to the established order of power. At the time, the paramount philosophies of knowledge, were Aristotelian philosophy and Deism. For Aristotle, experience is explained as nothing but the cognitive expression of the operation of unavoidable, implacable, mechanical laws. According to this perspective, the mind does not

so much interpret the world as gradually reveal the inner properties that bring order to the senses. Hence, knowledge is not held to be driven by **ceaseless** innovation but by a sort of homing instinct that eventually makes perception and comprehension **correspond** with the underlying eternal, appointed order.

For its part, Deism also holds that experience is governed by laws. These impinge upon experience and cognition. They cannot be discovered in the way that the mechanical laws governing the physical and social world can be supposedly, revealed. This is because their origin and force are understood to be finally a transcendental matter. In this sense, consciousness is not autonomous. It is more properly regarded as an endowment awarded by the divine grace of supreme intelligence. The ultimate purpose of earthly existence is to gain eternal life. Intention and experience are conceived of as a wager that demonstrates fitness for salvation. To be more precise, the endowment of consciousness enables mankind to distinguish between illusion and reality. Faith ensures that, by these means, consciousness and experience are brought ever closer to the ways of God. Apostasy is deplored as the slide into damnation. This dispensation provides no succour to achieved celebrity. If, by 'the self' is meant a free agent that acts upon the world in accordance with conscious personal design, religion finds no place for the business of what today is called 'self-making'. **In this respect, Locke's twin defences of Natural Rights and private property posed an apocalyptic challenge to the *entente* between Church and Crown.**

Locke's view of Empiricism differs radically from the precedents of both Aristotelian philosophy and Deism. To begin with, it holds that experience is not just a matter of reconciling cognition with the mechanical laws of the Universe **and by implication. Ascribed Celebrity.** If that is all that there is to the case, he reasons, cognition would surely always draw the same conclusions from experience. **That is, obedience to the rule of law makes**

innovation a thankless debtor. Locke objects strongly to the chains forged by the Church and the Crown around the natural play of perception and cognition which he takes to be an unjustifiable imposition of authority. Locke is one of the father's of evidence-bias based in enquiry. By the same token he is one of the first voluble remembered enemies of the panoply of Establishment, in particular what is now called Ascribed hierarchy. For Locke, the condition of Society imposes two responsibilities upon 'Man':

The first is to do whatsoever he thinks fit for the preservation of himself and others within the permission of the *Law of Nature*: by which Law common to them all, he and all the rest of *Mankind are one Community*, make up one Society distinct from all other Creatures. And were it not for the corruption and viciousness of degenerate Men, there would be no need for any other ... the other power a man has in the state of Nature, is the *power to punish the Crimes* committed against the Law. (Locke 1960: 352, emphasis in the original).

The significance attributed here to Locke's philosophy of knowledge directly pertains to the emergence of achieved (individualized, possessive rather than donated) celebrity. An influential position in the study of celebrity today is that celebrity is the accumulation of attention capital i.e. public interest in an elevated individual that typically carries with it economic value (Franck 2019). The *Two Treatises* remind readers that attention capital

would have no *raison d'être* without the recognition of private property as a legitimate subject of public exchange and transaction (Locke 1960). Empiricism is part of a series of convulsive changes in the 16th and 17th centuries that invert the traditional social hierarchy built around Church and Crown. It avows that individuals are now sovereign over themselves and their possessions. Life ceases to be understood as authoritatively assigned from outside of **the self** (Dunn 1984: 88). Because individual status is no longer taken to be exclusively set by the *entente* between Church and the Crown, the projection of the private self as an object of attention, becomes a legitimate public aspiration and work in progress. **As already noted in the paper**, Locke's insights did not, of course, come from out of the blue. They were, themselves, the outcome of a combination of **philosophical**, historical and material factors. Commentators on celebrity have cited, *inter alia*, as prominent, the rise of print culture, urbanization, democratization and the elaboration of the public sphere (Roach 2007; Inglis 2010; Sternheimer 2011). All of these factors resulted in the Church and Crown finding the ground move beneath their feet. Locke's achievement was to fashion in words, the import of the extraordinary **experiential**, historical and material transformations taking place around him. His conception of private property identified the resources of the self, as well as material property, as constitutive. In defending private property from the overbearing patronage of tradition, he made private experience a legitimate value of social worth that, in turn, commanded a price. By these means the private sense of personal value was potentially turned into a compelling, moving focus of public attention and economic value.

Locke's writings have been widely acclaimed to have **been transformative in** the economic and political development of Western society (Cranston 1957; Forster 2005; Collins 2020) (2). The position taken here is that, in this respect, the enthusiasm of secondary

commentators needs to be a little tempered. The reason for this is plain. There has already been occasion to note that Locke's case is advanced on behalf of *private property*. As an educated man of his day he takes it for granted that this category is male, caucasian, and literate. When all is weighed and brought into the balance, it is implausible to regard him as an unqualified advocate of universal enfranchisement and freedom (3). Equally, nothing mitigates from the proposition that his theory of Natural Rights and espousal of the legitimacy of private property to pursue its own interests was a major catalyst in the development of liberal pluralism and achieved celebrity. At one stroke, Locke's writings unlock individual enterprise from the *entente* between Absolute Monarchy and the Church that governed fame. Although they are not causally or directly related to Luther and the Reformation, they constitute a dramatic continuation of the move to make individual conscience axial in the constitution of society. Locke's writings validate private preoccupations and wants to function, so to speak, as acceptable, unregulated public installations into the texture of social life (Schochet 1989; Wootton 1992; Mendle 1995). Understandably, the secondary literature assigns prominence to the worth of the theory of Natural Rights and the theory of Private Property Rights to enterprise and politics (Forster 2005; Kramer 2008). Conversely, it might be objected, that this only tells half the story. Moreover, the half that remains untold is of the utmost relevance to students of celebrity. To put matters succinctly, Locke's thought cleared the ground not only for innovation in enterprise and empowerment in politics; it also directly signalled the arrival on the public stage of the private individual, as a thing in itself, whose actions must be respected as self-determined and free, as a source of contingent social impact. Further, the value of social impact could be translated into a price that facilitated strategic investment and financial trading in celebrity. Without this recognition, celebrity in its modern form would not exist. If

private property can now be legitimately managed as the owner sees fit (within the provisions of the law), so can the full gamut of individual inclinations, dispositions, skills, talents and accomplishments constitutive of the self. In this way of looking at things, Locke's defence of private property rights is even more mould-breaking than most secondary commentators have supposed. His case that property is a matter of private jurisdiction carries the subsidiary proposition that its proponents are equally at liberty to develop and present themselves, *as noteworthy selves*, just as they see fit. The essence of the case on the priority of privacy for the property owner is that external interference in personal conduct is inadmissible. The sole exception is when private enterprise breaks the letter of the law. After Locke, to self-comprehend as privately situated in relation to others, supports the logical possibility of becoming anything that one wants to be in the sight of others. Locke's case warrants the hypothesis that the core paradox of achieved celebrity can be expressed as follows: the public phenomenon would have no existence without the normalization of the anterior notion of [the legitimacy of private property](#). The fame of what is called achieved celebrity today, is first, dependent upon the right of private individuals to think, feel and portray themselves freely. Moreover, the outcome of public attention that derives from this is, itself conceived as contingent and, in principle, ephemeral. In the course of this the meaning of 'duration' in relation to the being of fame undergoes a decisive transformation.

The Revolt Against Absolutism

That Locke himself became known in literate circles in Europe by the reputation of his thought, and additionally, was listed as a clear and present danger by the English state,

testifies to how profoundly culture was changing all around him. The self-expression of individuals situated outside of Court Society was no longer beholden to the patronage of religion and the monarchy. They were now subject to a new arbiter: the **market** of public opinion. Of course, the relationship between privately primed fame and the public was never unmediated. Private property had access to its own networks of influence. Examples include sports gatherings e.g. the hunt, shooting parties, society balls, weddings, feasts, dinners, faith-based ceremonies, etc. Members used these settings to expand conduits to accumulate more **notable** social impact. With the development of industrialization and democratic representation, the media crystallized as an incisive influence in the management of attention capital. The revolt against absolutism in Britain was dramatically amplified by the Civil War (1642-1651).

The consequences of the revolt against absolutism are worth reflecting upon at greater length. They show that individualized, possessive forms of celebrity carried with them the seeds of a new absolutism in supposedly Republican conditions of life. Later, the case of Oliver Cromwell will be used to put flesh on the bones of this proposition. To come to the denial of the worth of private property in the English Stuart regime, 'from above', the issue of 'the divine right of Kings' was a major contributory factor in the British Civil War. For example, most historians agree that, *Ship Money*, which Charles I attempted to levy, heedless of Parliamentary approval from 1634, was a core issue in precipitating the outbreak of hostilities (Mendle 1995; Langeluddecke 2007) (4). The demand for *Ship Money* applied what Charles faithfully took to be his indisputable divine right to raise funds from his subjects to finance the goals of the nation, as defined by him. Charles took it for granted that the interests of the Monarch were equivalent to the interests of the people. There was no betwixt and between. Sovereignty conferred upon the occupant of the pinnacle of

ascribed (received, time-hallowed) celebrity the duty to honour the divinely granted role of ruling over all. There was barely any place for what would now be called 'Achieved Celebrity' in the Stuart order of things. The institutional arrangement left scant room for ordinary people to affirm and develop noteworthy, public qualities. Among other things, the Civil War exposed the non-serviceable aspects of this traditional landscape of authority and public recognition. It was no longer hospitable to all of the King's subjects. Most vociferously, private property interests asserted their independence and readiness to depart from custom. The Civil War was a violent clash between the traditional interests of the Monarch and the rising interests of the gentry (5). Even in the throes of downfall, in the course of his trial (1649), Charles displayed icy disdain toward the worth of the mortal judiciary. 'A king,' he affirmed to the prosecution, 'cannot be tried by any superior jurisdiction on earth' (Petrie 1935: 248). In other words the pinnacle of what we would now call Ascribed Celebrity was eternally and inevitably above the considerations of his Court of Prosecution i.e. a court if what today would be called 'Achieved Celebrities'. Later, Locke was scathing about the doctrine of the divine right of Kings. The People who 'are naturally free' by their 'own consent' gave the government of their conduct over to 'a single person' which 'they thought safe enough in his Honesty and Prudence' (Locke 1960: 343). The Civil War left them sadder and wiser. As Locke sardonically puts it:

They never dream'd of Monarchy being *Jure*
Divine, which we never heard of among
 Mankind, till it was revealed to us by the
 Divinity of this last age; nor even allowed
 a Paternal Power to have a right to Dominion,

or to be the Foundation of all Government.

In any event, the principle that Charles adverted to during his trial fell upon deaf ears. The Parliamentary Court, found the King guilty of fomenting the war, and sentenced him to death. This provided not only a trenchant **vindication** of the Rights of private property. It also constituted a platform for the cultivation of a new type of fame. **As Locke's defence of private property enjoins**, this was understood to be based irrevocably outside Court Society (Locke 1960, 1975). Measured as a focal point of **individualized, possessive** public interest, **this new form of attention capital** was unprecedented. It imprinted its authority upon public life by **decisively outflanking** the tradition of ascribed celebrity, founded in the Church and Crown.

History went on to show that the corruption of Ascribed Celebrity (the Crown) quickly fell far short of introducing a blank copy book for Achieved Celebrity. New types of corruption in the accumulation and management of fame gained a foothold. After the conclusion of the Civil War, symbolically, those who rose to fame in the court of public opinion stood on the rubble of Monarchy. Yet in some circles, their paramouncy in society never succeeded in extinguishing fears that their new fame reeked of old Corruption. Despite his understandable reticence on the matter, Locke's argument in the *Two Treatises* pointed to the inevitability of Republicanism (Locke 1960). The bold philosophical intervention of freeing private property holders from the restraints of the Church and the Crown logically implied that they should, in time, and by force of Reason, directly move on to manage their own affairs. By common consent, historians hold that Locke's ideas were a seminal influence upon Thomas Jefferson in his drafting of the *Declaration of Independence* (Ward 2017; Bradley Thompson 2019). Republicanism means ending elite rule **and moderating Ascribed**

types of fame), and replacing them with the taste and rule of the citizenry. Paradoxically, it is not equipped with any defence against the rise of individuals or a clique to gain domination. For example, after the American defeat of the British in the War of Independence, a powerful cult of celebrity developed around the leader of the victorious armed forces and first President of the Republic, George Washington (Wick 1982; Longmore 1988). This involved a complex fusion of adulation, messianism and irrational affect that led the historian David Bell, to characterize Washington as an 'American idol' (Bell 2019: 53-90). The moral force of Republicanism finally rests upon casting aside unmerited elitism. Contrarily, the freshly tilled soil may, in time, encourage new types of elite domination (and in some cases absolutism) and idolatry to flourish.

In 1689, while Locke laboured on the *Second Treatise of Government*, all of this was almost a century in the future. However, he did not need to be clairvoyant to see the new opportunities for elite domination and idolatry in the Republican dispensation. The recent history of England taught the lesson. There could be no greater cancellation of Royal privilege and patronage imaginable than regicide. It carried in its train not only public notice of the indisputable superior power of private property, but also the promise of an immense new beginning, for possessive, individualized fame separated from the trappings of ascribed celebrity. An unyielding line would now be drawn under undeserved elitism. In theory, the age of hereditary influence and ascribed celebrity would be buried. Yet the British experiment in Republicanism lasted barely a decade. The turn taken by private property in running the affairs of the country rapidly ran aground. It collapsed in a climate of discontent and disappointment. The class that ruthlessly sponsored regicide, now implored the Royal line to bring back calm and the comfort of custom to a benighted country. Ignominiously, Republicanism culminated in the Restoration (1660).

The Achieved Celebrity of Oliver Cromwell

Disquiet with the politics of fame was a significant part of the popular grievance against the Republican experiment. After 1649, the alpha representative of private property who rose to prominence in the Parliamentary ranks was the commander of the armed forces, Oliver Cromwell. His emergence as Lord Protector in 1653, following four years of Parliamentary stalemate, brought **the shadow of new forms of absolutism, based upon possessive, individualized fame into the reckoning.** The Protectorate initiated a period of misguided, military backed asceticism. Cromwell beseeched the public that his elevation to the magistracy was not a matter of personal ambition, but of duty. To begin with, Cromwell adopted the wardrobe of a commoner citizen in carrying out his role as head of state. It was a choice of fashion designed to symbolize the end of inherited rank and the rule of merit and equality in government. Cromwell proceeded on the basis that divine providence, which he believed watched over him during the Civil War and brought victory to his forces, **continued to be** behind his appointment as Lord Protector (Worden 1985). Cromwell portrayed himself as nothing more or less than God's servant. The mantle of humility belied public opinion. Even in 1653, Cromwell's status as an Olympian hero was already **promulgated** in the Civil War literature. For example, in his 'Horatian Ode Upon Cromwell's Return from Ireland', Andrew Marvell compared Cromwell to both Caesar and Hannibal (Ritger 2018: 634). Adulation for culturally revered classical precedents is understandable. From an English standpoint, Cromwell's battle victories pointed to an epic hero worthy of deep public acclaim. This did not suppress the worries in some quarters, that Republicanism had inadvertently created a new ogre. As early as 1647, radical cliques among the *Diggers*

and *Levellers*, who in many respects anticipated the arguments concerning the legitimacy of private interests that Locke was to make later, bestirred a propaganda campaign, intended to debunk Cromwell. This took the form of a fusillade of meetings, bulletins, newsletters and pamphlets aimed to expose his unfitness for rule (Ritgers 2018: 640). In Europe, where fears of copycat takeover's by men of private property were rife after 1649, Cromwell's conduct in the position of Lord Protector was an object of **public** fascination. As **his term of office grew**, he was vilified for allegedly adopting the airs and graces of the system of ascribed celebrity that the victory of Parliament and the Army had supposedly deposed. For example, Giovanni Sagredo, the mid-17th century extraordinary Venetian ambassador to Britain called Cromwell the 'most famous (man) of this century' (Sagredo 1864: 76). Yet continental opinion shared the view of many in the remnants of *Digger* and *Leveller* ranks that Cromwell was a **Republican idol**. According to this way of looking at things, the asceticism and humility that he cultivated in public was decried as **a mere** a mask. Thus, Lorenzo Paoluzzi, who was appointed by Venice to be 'official correspondent' in London, reported in 1653, that the 'Republic' of Britain had reverted to an 'aristocracy' ruled by 'the increasing possession and exertion of supreme authority', guaranteed by Cromwell, who retained absolute control of the army and further, was covertly, rumoured to bask in public acclaim (Barducci 2008: 56). Cromwell's term of office pursued four interlinked general domestic goals: to engineer national calm and unity; to restore the public finances, which had been disrupted by the War, to a sound footing; to invest in the peace and prosperity in the American colonies; and to take the necessary measures to ensure that virtue prevails over vice in the life of the nation. From the beginning, all of these goals met with considerable contention and factionalism in Parliament. In response, Cromwell adopted a series of increasingly authoritarian measures in government (9). Among **the most hated by**

the public, high on the list was the *Major Generals* measure (1655-1657). This divided England into regional administrative units ruled by army commanders loyal to the Lord Protector. For many citizens this was uncomfortably close to what would now be called, martial rule. Its underlying purpose was to bolster Cromwell's domination. Unquestionably, he used his achieved fame as the lever to force through these policies. Who among his peers had the temerity to oppose the acknowledged Hero of Republicanism? Today, most historians maintain that the measures only poured oil on troubled waters. Consecutively, the same sources submit that in these fragile times, Cromwell's charisma was the main reason why the Protectorate remained intact (Worden 1985; Coward 2000; Davis 2001). The canard that Cromwell's Republican fame veiled a clandestine agenda to implement a hereditary institution of power was dealt a severe blow with his response to the *Humble Petition and Advice*, moved and presented to him by the *Second Protectorate Parliament* (1657). To the puritan mind, the document was an infamous stain on the honour of Republicanism. Scandalously, it volunteered to Cromwell the Crown. There could be no greater affront to the commoner cause. What the resolution of the commoners had battled and brought down, was now to be reinstated by recalling the traditional hierarchy and raising aloof a representative from their own rank to become what would now be called an Ascribed Celebrity. By all accounts, Cromwell's head was turned by the offer (Fitzgibbons 2013). He grasped the attraction of the Crown as a symbol of continuity that might, conceivably, assuage the distemper of the times, provoked, in part by the draconian policies of the Protectorate. Yet the shame of betraying the Republican cause weighed too heavily upon him. He also realized that acceptance of the *Petition* would incense the Army. Doubtless, in refusing the humble petitioners, Cromwell fell back once again on the conviction that Providence would put new opportunities in his path to achieve the goals of

the Protectorate. By this recourse, his ardent desire for peace and harmony of the people could eventually come to pass. Whether or not this was wishful thinking is beside the point. Cromwell died unexpectedly in 1658. Whatever hopes he nurtured for the prosperity of the Protectorate died with him. The 'most famous man of the century' was succeeded, not by virtue of merit, but by the *de facto*, restitution of hereditary principle. The new Lord Protector was Cromwell's son, Richard. His term of office lasted a paltry nine months. In pressing ahead with the *Second Treatise*, Locke would have been aware of the unfortunate contradictions that government by private property precipitated in the British case. Yet his defence of Natural Rights and private property remained steadfast. How could Locke pluck reassuring light from the recent history of darkness?

Conclusion: Right, Property and Fame

Locke was a precursor of the Enlightenment. He died long before the gestation of the Enlightenment conviction in the rule of Reason in the government of human affairs became a *cause celebre*. This did not occur until the *American War of Independence* (1776) and the *French Revolution* (1789). Notwithstanding this, his argument in the *Two Treatises* already makes the case for invincible Reason (Locke 1960). To this end, he had a method to deal with the undeniable historical failure of the Protectorate to achieve the purposes that it set for itself. It was to redouble the case for the sovereignty of Reason. By advancing the cause of Reason, Locke assumed that the **same possessive individualism that made Cromwell a threat to the impartial, democratic rule, would turn against old corruption to make the common weal of Reason prevail**. Once again, he did not spell it out in so many words, but the logic of his position is, in fine, that **Right** follows Reason. **Right, understood as**

individualized, possessive merit, is the decisive basis of fame (Locke 1960). Locke's train of thought operated with a binary obligation. For him, the freedom of private property must ensure, in the long run, that Reason will prevail in the government of human affairs (Locke 1960).

More sceptical thinkers that followed him in the tradition of Empiricism were less sanguine.

It is worth ending by briefly mentioning the most able among them to illustrate the limitations of Locke's position. In the writings of David Hume, the bullish confidence of Locke and the Enlightenment *philosophes* collide with a decidedly bearish stance in the Enlightenment tradition. Hume agrees with Locke that empiricism teaches the lesson that nothing in custom or habit can be relied upon. However, *contra* Locke case, Hume submits just because Reason triumphs over the traditions of Papal mendacity and Monarchical privilege, affords no proof to trust that this will eternally abide (Hume 1999, 2000). In Hume's view, Locke, in suggesting otherwise, over-reached himself. Hume developed a theory of human enquiry that refers to divisions in the structure of the human mind rather than Divine Design or Right to explain the track of history (Hume 1999, 2000). This is not the place to attempt a full account of Hume's very rich sceptical contribution to this subject. In a paper of this type, it will suffice to alight briefly upon Hume's thinking on religion and idolatry to enlarge the point (Hume 1999, 2007). A distinctive feature of his philosophy is that it treats psychology as the handmaiden of philosophy. His critique of religion is a case in point. As a consistent Empiricist, Hume holds that the human mind is absolutely ignorant of first causes or future eventualities in the narrative of the human race. The mystery of existence fires up a strong propensity in the human mind to seek explanations of questions of origin and being in an invisible, transcendent power. Transcendence is a part of the new possessive, individualized type of fame that is attendant upon Locke's defence of private

property rights. However, whereas in Locke the ascent of Reason and the decline in Faith, tacitly carry with them the institutional contraction of religion, Hume's philosophy contains much more tolerance for the proposition that the rise of what is now called celebrity culture, involves the sublimation of many forms of religious belief. For Hume, organized religion is a psychological solution to the problem of human anxiety about the mystery of origin and being. He sees it as a faulty solution. This is because the answer to the original mystery of existence resides in the mysterious notion of an ineffable, inscrutable Supreme Being, namely God. In Hume's view, this notion is unsatisfactory. It gives birth to separate problems about the human understanding of questions of origin and being. Perhaps the most pressing of these, is the challenge of how faith can be invested in an entity that is not empirically accessible. Upon this challenge, Hume's critique builds two lines of argument about human practice and religion that rely heavily upon premises of psychology. In the first place, he argues that the organized religions is a symptom of the yearning for God and transcendence. According to Hume, this disposition is inherent in the structure of the human mind. As such, it will persist even after the combination of Reason and Right deal a blow to Religious ascendancy (Siebert 1984: 381). Hume's argument carries with it the probability that what we now call secularization will not quell the thirst for idols and transcendence. Rather, it will simply perservere with this structural requirement of human life in sublimated form.

The second line of argument is that Locke's defence of the rights of private property is vulnerable to the objection that it leaves the overwhelming majority, namely the propertyless and women, as a whole, out of the reckoning. The absence haunts Locke's understanding and application of the terms 'Reason' and 'Right' and create the impulse for revisionism (Stevens 1989). For Hume, enfranchisement and the empowerment of 'the

People', is not just a gain for democracy. It also multiplies opportunities for private individuals, as things in themselves, whose actions must be respected as self determined and free, to rise to the fore in public culture. Hume's theory makes Idolatry as much a feature of the Age of Reason as Right and Justice. It is safe to say that Locke would have found 'Populist forms' of fame disagreeable. Hume was arguably more resigned to their manifestation on the grounds that it is the inevitable consequence of the defence of Natural Rights and private property.

Be that as it may be, by opening up the inclinations, wants, desires and fantasies of private property to public attention, Locke's philosophy unintentionally revised the relationship between personality and fame. The challenge of 'the moment' to the traditional conflation between fame and duration, was a gear-change in the popular understanding of the noteworthy personality. This way of looking at fame was combined with enormous transformations in the production, distribution and exchange of print culture (Raymond 1999). Together with other aspects in the development of the public sphere, these massively contributed to making the noteworthy personality immediately 'newsworthy'.

It is worth ending by returning give a little more detail of the challenge that Locke's philosophy poses to the general view of historians today that celebrity is an eighteenth century phenomenon. The first use of the term is traced back to the mid-eighteenth century (Bell 2020: 45). It is in the writings of Charles Pinot Duclos and Samuel Johnson that Lilti finds the origins of the term (Lilti 2017: 92-102). Locke is absent in his book. Lilti's preference is to dwell upon 18th century applications of the term. Of these he favours, the thought of Antoine Furetere who associated celebrity with the 'pomp' and 'magnificence' that derived from the precedents of Court Society; Julie de Lesinasse, who placed it on the same slate as notoriety; and Nicolas Chamfort, who appears to have anticipated Daniel

Boorstin's work by nearly two centuries, for whom the term denotes artifice, inauthenticity and shallowness (Lilti 2017: 102-104; Boorstin 1992). Lilti follows Furetere in regarding the emergence of celebrity culture to be the product of the slippage of authority from the Crown and the Church. What a reading of Locke's writings shows is that the structural changes in society and psychology that were pre-requisites for celebrity existed nearly a full century before the term came into vogue. The contemporary public meaning of celebrity would have been impossible without the anterior defence of the legitimate experience and elements of personality, born in private property relations. There can be no public achieved celebrity without the legitimate justification of the private realm of life.

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- (1) The Glorious Revolution (1688) refers to the deposition of James II from the throne of England and his replacement by his daughter Mary and her Dutch husband William III. James II was deposed for attempting to reintroduce Papal jurisdiction to Britain.
- (2) Locke's writings are generally regarded to provide the philosophical foundation to Parliamentary democracy and the free market.
- (3) The defence of private property does not include provision for the freedom of the propertyless class. Locke was a man of his time in regarding private property to afford citizens with stakeholder status, since it is associated with wealth creation. As such, he deemed that private property merited influence in the government of the nation.
- (4) Charles I proclaimed the divine right of Kings as the basis for raising tax revenue and articulating the national interest.

- (5) It was in no sense a peasant or working class revolution. Private property resisted developing a universal theory of human rights. However, it is fair to say that this theory is implicit in Locke's *Two Treatises*.

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