

SOUNDING THE LIBERAL CONNECTION:
LOCKEAN TRACES IN JOHN C. CALHOUN'S POLITICAL THOUGHT

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Introduction

John Caldwell Calhoun occupies a pre-eminent place in the pantheon of nineteenth-century American statesmen. In all probability the single most original political thinker of his generation, he devoted a better portion of his political career to publicly reflecting on the nature of the Union, striving to define and clarify the major values and considerations that it rested on. American political thought in the first half of the nineteenth century cannot be fully appreciated without acknowledgement of the pivotal role that Calhoun played in its emergence. A native of South Carolina, he was instrumental in developing the theory of states' rights or minority veto, concepts that proved fatal in the hands of the secessionists of 1860–61. In addition, Calhoun's political career was intertwined with the course of the federal republic after the War of 1812. Secretary of war in James Monroe's cabinet, twice vice-president under John Quincy Adams and Andrew Jackson (1824–1832), and from 1844 as secretary of state, he served his nation with varying degrees of intensity.¹

For all the innovative elements that he introduced in American political thought, Calhoun was very much part of a tradition that originated with the seventeenth-century English philosopher, John Locke. Recent scholarship has tended to emphasise the presence of one set of political ideals, associated with what is usually labelled as the republican interpretation of his thought. Students adopting such a stance, at the same time, seem to have downplayed or have totally denied the significance of another tradition in understanding of his political thought, namely Lockean liberalism.²

This is, in part, understandable, given Calhoun's general fame for his explicit rejection of any political claim made with reference to the Lockean state of nature and natural rights. Nonetheless, various interpretations of his philosophy also argue for his strong links to the US political tradition. This tradition, in turn, was not confined to one set of political values but consisted of several strains as works

¹ On Calhoun's political life, among others, see Niven 1988; Bartlett 1993; Wiltse 1944; Wiltse 1949; Wiltse 1951.

² See Cheek 2001, 17, 96–97; Brown 2000, x, 4; 39, 353n79, 122, 261, 310; Genovese 1994, 53; Genovese 1969, 158, 211–13; Jaffa 2000, 412–14; Ashworth 1995, 206; Kromkowski 2002, 128.

by Bernard Bailyn or Forrest McDonald and others have demonstrated.³ It should come as no surprise, then, that Calhoun's efforts to position himself within the Fathers' multiple tradition also linked him to Lockean liberalism – very much part of that tradition. He was part of a political community in which Locke's ideas constituted only one of those “political languages” – to use J. G. A. Pocock's term – that assumed legitimising force and commending a particular way of argumentation made political messages resonate with a potentially receptive audience.⁴

Links between Calhoun's and Locke's political philosophy have been discussed by previous scholarship, mainly concentrating on the issues of liberty, interest and states' rights. Overlaps between Calhoun's and Locke's conceptions of liberty were briefly referred to by Paul F. Boller, Jr., while Gillis J. Harp showed the presence of the Lockean concern with the disharmonising effect of government in Calhoun's political thought. Darryl Baskin, in turn, drew a parallel between Lockean individualism and Calhoun's pluralism. Carl Degler has identified Calhoun as a liberal thinker because of his theory of the concurrent majority, on account of a political majority led by reason in its recognition of minority interests. Louis Hartz discussed connection between Locke's and Calhoun's ideas from the perspective of natural rights, concentrating on the relevance of the Lockean state of nature to Calhoun's states' rights doctrine.⁵

Calhoun, nevertheless, adopted and employed Lockean liberalism in more ways than recognised by these scholars, appropriating and in a number of instances modifying various components or “idioms” of the Lockean language as they are featured in John Locke's *Second Treatise of Government*. In this essay I argue that those idioms can be identified in connection with concepts such as rationality, liberty, and self-government, as well as the ontological features of property.

Reason, liberty and self-government

An issue that is central to the connection between Calhoun's political thought and that of Locke concerns the problem of liberty and rationality. Calhoun's conception of liberty distinguishes him from the mainstream American liberal tradition, based on the tenet that liberty is a natural, hence inalienable, right of the individual, since he makes a clear distinction between those entitled to and those unworthy of liberty. He denies the existence of the state of nature and therefore any right derived from it that would be ubiquitous, available for everyone; on the contrary, he assumes the natural inequality of individuals: some of them are capable of

³ Bailyn 1992; McDonald 1985; Ellis 1993; Klein – Brown – Hench 1992.

⁴ On Pocock's concept of political languages see his Pocock 1989; Pocock 1987, 21.

⁵ Boller 1967, 395–408; Harp 1985, 107–120; Baskin 1969, 49–66; Degler 1977, 86–87; Hartz 1991, 145–172; Garson 1985, 158–166.

bearing liberty, others not.⁶ Yet, for all their obvious incongruence with natural rights theory, a closer look at Calhoun's ideas about liberty and human development reveals that through his advocacy of the perfection of the moral and intellectual capacities of the individual, Calhoun adopted and extended Locke's liberal argument about rationality as a prerequisite to freedom and self-government.⁷

Lockean liberalism postulates the natural equality of man and thus liberty for all in the state of nature. Locke admits that individuals cannot be equal in the concrete sense: "*Excellency of Parts and Merit* may place others above the Common Level: *Birth* may subject some, and *Alliance or Benefits* others, to pay an Observance to those to whom Nature, Gratitude or other Respects may have made it due."⁸ Yet, natural equality eliminates such differences. Individuals are equal in the sense that they are equally entitled to natural freedom and cannot dominate one another. In the state of nature, every individual is entitled to the same degree of liberty, limited only by the law of nature, which the individual is capable of conceiving through his reason.⁹

However, as Peter C. Myers points out, according to Locke, human reason is far from being perfect, and its weakness is in part due to the superior power of imagination, which often guides human action in a misleading, non-rational way as well as to passions leading men to action in a partial way. This defective nature of human rationality renders existence in the state of nature precarious, since human individuals cannot fulfil the requirement of following the law of nature through imperfect reason. This is also the reason why Locke's natural state tends to break down into irrational moral anarchy.¹⁰

Such a frail status of human reason is a universal trait of man, not peculiar to the state of nature and makes the creation and running of government necessary but also difficult at the same time, since only people with full rational capacity are capable of self-government. Hence, according to Myers, Locke establishes a strong link between rights and rational personhood: "To be person is to be a responsible agent, self-owning being capable of rational choice and self-government."¹¹ In this way, Locke makes rationality the condition of freedom. Only individuals with the full capacity to reason can follow either the law of nature or positive laws. In

⁶ This has been pointed out by several scholars. See, for instance, Merriam 1964, 328–30; Hartz 1985, 200, 202–203; Boller 1967, 400–403; Parrington 1954, 73–76; Spain 1951, 84–89.

⁷ My use of the male third person singular with reference to children and political individuals is to conform though not consenting to Locke's (and other contemporary political theorists') usage, obviously based on an unequal conception of gender relations.

⁸ Zuckert 1994, 16; see also McDonald, *Novus Ordo Seclorum*, 53; Locke 1991, sec. 54. Unless indicated otherwise, emphases in the quotations of Locke's *Second Treatise* are original.

⁹ Locke 1991, secs. 4–6; and Laslett, introduction to *Two Treatises*, 94–95.

¹⁰ Myers 2003, 6–9.

¹¹ Myers 2003, 10.

other words, he excludes certain groups of people from the community of rational beings with full rights.

One important corollary of this argument is that, according to Locke, since the child does not yet possess this degree of reason, his liberty is limited and not so much by the laws which, lacking full reason, he would be unable to obey, but by the fact that he is under the authority of his father: his life, liberty and property are under the father's control. Until reason is fully developed in the child, and he reaches maturity, his liberty is limited by his father. "Thus we are *born Free*", says Locke, "as we are born Rational; not that we have actually the Exercise of either; Age that brings one, brings with it the other too. [...] A *Child is Free* by his Father's Title, by his Father's Understanding, which is to govern him, till he hath it of his own."¹² With Locke, each individual starts rational development with a clean slate, and it is education and their conditions that are to result in differentiation with regard to their identities as adults.¹³ As Locke argues, it is the "State of Maturity wherein [man] might be suppos'd capable to know that Law, that so he might keep his Actions within the bounds of it."¹⁴ This is why while being infants, human beings, although possessing natural rights, exist under the authority of their parents, which thus restricts their action guided by imperfect reason.¹⁵

Thus, for Locke, the child, with the help of his parents, gradually develops his understanding of the law of reason, learns how to exercise his own reason and to obey that law. Until he becomes capable of doing so he has no free will of his own; his liberty is limited by his parents, who, as fully rational beings are able to comprehend the law of reason. It is only when the child reaches maturity, adulthood and the full capacity to exercise his reason that his father's authority over him ceases to exist, because he can understand the law that limits his liberty.

In addition to children, Myers points out, Locke also excludes others from the community of rational citizens: persons with mental defects cannot participate in government based on consent, nor could representatives of the human race having existed at a less developed stage of rationality in human history. Only once morally educated to a sufficient extent did they become able to form governments based on their consent.¹⁶ Locke, then, makes rationality a prerequisite for human self-government both in the state of nature and in the state of civil society. Consequently, his other premise about the weakness of the human mind which needs improvement

¹² Locke 1991, sec. 61; see also Locke 1991, secs. 58, 170.

¹³ See also McDonald 1985, 53. On the centrality of the child's dependence on parental custody due to his non-rational condition in Anglo-American Enlightenment political and legal thought see Brewer 2005.

¹⁴ Locke 1991, sec. 59.

¹⁵ Myers 2003, 10.

¹⁶ Myers 2003, 11.

through education also presupposes the exclusion of individuals with defective rationality from the total enjoyment of natural rights, including liberty.

Rational morality as a normative trait of Locke's individual, then, is restrictive with regard to natural rights including liberty and self-government. Although rejecting Locke's natural rights theory, Calhoun adopted rationality with this restrictive quality when it came to the liberty of human beings under government. He was able to speak this idiom of Lockean liberalism without having to contradict himself, since for Locke, rationality is a universal criterion, regardless of the distinction between the state of nature and the social state.

How did, then, Calhoun adopt and utilise this normative Lockean connection between human rationality, self-government, and liberty? In the assessing this connection it is fundamental to start with Calhoun's understanding of man and society, which is obviously in contrast to the Lockean view. One of the basic premises in his *Disquisition on Government*, his major work of political theory, is that man is born into the social state, which is necessary for him fully to develop "his moral and intellectual faculties or raise himself, in the scale of being, much above the level of the brute creation".¹⁷ It is in the social state, according to Calhoun, that the individual can best develop his faculties: "To man, he [i.e. God] has assigned the social and political state as best adapted to develop the great capacities and faculties, intellectual and moral, with which he has endowed him."¹⁸ Such a claim is clearly a reversal of Locke's natural rights argument, involving all, equally.

Furthermore, according to Calhoun, individuals, born into the social state, are not born free: they are under the control of their parents and the laws of the state. In his words: "instead of being born free and equal, [men] are born subject, not only to parental authority, but to the laws and institutions of the country where born, and under whose protection they draw their first breath".¹⁹

Calhoun provides a more detailed exploration of this issue in his 'Speech on the Oregon Bill', delivered in the Senate on 27 June 1848, to rebut the proposed amendments to restrict the right of southerners to move with their slave property into the Oregon Territory.²⁰ Here, he argues to refute the Lockean-Jeffersonian proposition about the equality of man. "Men are not born", Calhoun says. "Infants are born. They grow to be men. [...] They are not born free." He also denies the principle of the equal creation of men as asserted in the Declaration of Independence: "All men are not created. According to the Bible, only two, a man and a woman, ever were, and of these one was pronounced subordinate to the other."²¹

¹⁷ Calhoun 2003, XXVIII. 7.

¹⁸ Calhoun 2003, 10.

¹⁹ Calhoun 2003, 39, 40.

²⁰ Calhoun 1959–2003, XXV. 513–39; and Niven 1988, 315.

²¹ Calhoun 1959–2003, XXV. 534.

Nevertheless, ironically, here, in a vein similar to Locke, Calhoun builds his argument on the assumption that emphasises the child's inability to use his rational faculty. There is a qualitative difference between child and adult in the social state, which, according to Calhoun, manifests itself in the presence or lack of reason and liberty. As he continues, "While infants they are incapable of freedom, being destitute alike of the capacity of thinking and acting, without which there can be no freedom. Besides, they are necessarily born subject to their parents, and remain so among all people, savage and civilised, until the development of their intellect and physical capacity enables them to take care of themselves. They grow to all the freedom of which the condition in which they were born permits, by growing to be men."²²

Despite his denial of the Lockean concept of the abstract natural state with natural rights equally inherent in all human beings, through his understanding of childhood as a rationally defective state, Calhoun, in fact, utilises Locke's principles of restriction, regarding liberty and self-government. As we have seen, although investing the child, like the madman, with natural rights, Locke deemed their restriction necessary for the lack of rational morality of the infant, rendering him under parental guidance, depriving him of the right of self-government. Calhoun adopts the same attitude toward restricting the liberty of the child and other not fully rational humans with the important distinction of seeing social conditions limiting his moral and intellectual development. With Locke, being a normative natural trait for human individuals, rational morality characterises the natural and the social state alike; hence the presence of the natural state in his thought and its absence in Calhoun's do not serve as impediments to the latter excluding the non-rational from among those capable of self-government.

What connects Locke and Calhoun on the matter of rationality, then, is their exclusion of people out of the domain of liberty and self-government on account of frail reason. For Locke, liberty is not without limits in the social state for certain groups of people lacking reason: laws and parental authority exert restrictions on it. In this way, for Calhoun, liberty and self-government seem intimately bound up with rationality in the Lockean fashion. While Locke deems the lack of rationality in humans a reason to exclude them from the enjoyment of natural rights, causing them temporarily suspended and finding the moral education of the people necessary for self-government²³ Calhoun also makes rationality a prerequisite for liberty and self-government and thus a reason for exclusion of certain individuals and groups of people.

Calhoun's positing of the intimate link between rationality, liberty and self-government also accounts for his understanding of black slavery. In his conception

²² Calhoun 1959–2003, XXV. 534.

²³ Myers 2003, 13.

of human bondage, Calhoun extended to blacks Locke's understanding of childhood as the period of the individual's rational and moral development, connecting it with the notion of liberty being a precondition to progress. In the Lockean manner, he also talked about children being under the guidance of their parents until they were developed enough "to take care of themselves",²⁴ and he employed such notions in his understanding of slavery, from the 1830s onward, with the emergence of abolitionism to quiet voices denouncing slavery for its degrading effect on black slaves.

In response to the abolitionists, Calhoun argued that slavery in the South had a beneficial effect on the moral and intellectual development of black slaves, since through it, they had reached a "comparative level of civilized condition", and their emancipation would lead to the destruction of one race or the other. As far as black slaves were concerned, he claimed that "Never before has the black race of Central Africa, from the dawn of history to the present day, attained a condition so civilized and so improved, not only physically, but morally and intellectually." This is why he declared slavery to be "instead of an evil, a good – a positive good".²⁵ Calhoun, in this way, attributed the black slaves' achievement of civilisation to the paternalistic nature of the relationship between master and slave, that is, the extension of the father-child relationship, in which the development of the latter was supposedly guaranteed.

Yet, for all their achievements, in Calhoun's eyes, blacks were to be kept in bondage since they were incapable of self-government. To provide blacks with liberty that they were unsuited for would have been destructive to social relations, according to Calhoun's logic, and the improvement of blacks would be inhibited. Their level of development was not sufficient to enable them to live in civil society. Importantly, however, Calhoun never indicated that he thought black slaves capable of infinite advancement or of achieving a degree of development that would make their slave status unnecessary.²⁶ He did not see blacks as being capable of growing up, leaving their supposedly childlike conditions. Hence, he most safely constructed slavery as perpetual childhood for blacks.

Thus, although Calhoun's conception of the human condition and liberty was fundamentally different from the Lockean version, he justified the exclusion of individuals from civil society based on the consent of the governed by reference to human rationality, employing Lockean language. Calhoun's argument that the insufficient moral and intellectual level of the individual or a group of people was

²⁴ Calhoun 1959–2003, XXV. 534.

²⁵ Calhoun 1959–2003, XIII. 395; see also Calhoun 1959–2003, XIII. 63; Calhoun 1959–2003, XIV. 84; Calhoun 1959–2003, XV, 99; Calhoun 1959–2003, XVI, 112, 342, 349; Calhoun 1959–2003, XVIII. 278.

²⁶ Jaffa 2000, 420.

inimical to the full degree of liberty was derived from the Lockean tenet about the intimate link between rationality and self-government, also employed to legitimise the subjugation of an allegedly non-rational, childish race.

Property and self

In addition to the close Lockean link between rationality, self-government and liberty, Calhoun appropriated a concept of property that Locke elaborated in his *Second Treatise of Government*. Firm as Calhoun may have seemed in his overt refutation of Locke's theory of natural rights, his own theory of the generation of property rights did involve the Lockean notion of its legitimate acquisition through one's labour and thus self.

Property is undeniably the most crucial concept in Locke's political philosophy. Its restricted usage denotes possessions, while in an extensive sense it includes, to use the English philosopher's words, man's "Life, Liberty and Estate". Fundamentally, property provides the reason that men enter civil society: they intend to preserve it by erecting civil government.²⁷ One of the basic attributes of the human individual is his being a property. This notion is derived from Locke's premise rendering the individual the creation and thus the possession of God. "For Men being all the Workmanship of one Omnipotent, and infinitely wise Maker; All the Servants of one Sovereign Master, sent into the World by his order and about his business", Locke contends in connection with the divine creation of man. "[T]hey are his Property, whose Workmanship they are, made to last during his not one another[']s Pleasure." Yet, at the same time, for all his emphasis on God's power over man as His property, the divine proprietorship of the individual self is annulled by Locke's later claim that the individual self is his own proprietor. As Locke asserts, "Though the Earth, and all inferior Creatures be common to all Men, yet every Man has a *Property* in his own *Person*. This no Body has any Right to but himself."²⁸

Furthermore, with Locke, it is through the possessing of one's own body that one can acquire private property. All this, in turn, is expressed through the labour theory of value, which suggests that by means of his labour belonging to the self, in the course of work, the individual turns a given part of nature into his private property, making it exempt from claims by others. "For this *Labour* being the unquestionable Property of the Labourer", says Locke, "no Man but he can have a right to what that is once joyned to". Man acquires property through his labour, therefore he has a right to the fruits of his labour.²⁹ This, in turn, implies that the

²⁷ Locke 1991, sec. 87 (quotation); Laslett, introduction to *Two Treatise*, 101.

²⁸ Locke 1991, secs. 6, 27.

²⁹ Locke 1991, sec. 27. On Locke and labor see also Pangle, *Modern Republicanism*, 166–70; Huston 2003, 10.

amount of private property that one can possess, to a very large extent, depends on one's personal qualities, which are necessary for acquisition. From this comes the critical role of industry in the accumulation of wealth for Locke.

Locke's conception of property involves an important distinction in connection with the legitimate way of acquiring property. Richard J. Ellis has argued that, with Locke, both "egalitarian" and "individualist" conceptions of property can be identified. The egalitarian reading suggests that man in the state of nature can rightfully acquire only as much as is necessary to meet his needs, whereas the individualist reading emphasises the sanctity of private property in the social state. The egalitarian conception emphasises 'spoilage limitation', the limits on the acquisition of property or goods set by one's capacity to consume without leaving it spoiled.³⁰

Locke's "labour theory of value", his derivation of property from the self through human labour has further significance. In Locke's reasoning, property can become alienable only through individual consent exactly because it is "part" of the individual's personality, yet "distinguishable" from it. Taking away property without consent is thus deemed inadmissible in Locke's theory as opposed to Sir Robert Filmer's claim, for instance, according to which, no consent was necessary for the "king" or "the law" to "change property relations".³¹ Such a prohibition informed the American Revolutionaries' argument about their refusal to accept new taxes imposed on them by Parliament.

According to Guy Story Brown, a logical corollary of Calhoun's rejection of the state of nature philosophy in the *Disquisition* is that the issue of property and its protection play no role there, the South Carolinian's major concern being moral and intellectual development under the protection of government and not material progress. Therefore, Calhoun's position is in sharp contrast with Locke's, which held that government merely serves, in Brown's words, "as a protector of property". Understandably, he continues, "the term 'property', so far from providing the basis of government or providing the essential ends whence the necessity of government is itself derived, does not even occur in *A Disquisition on Government*".³² In other words, with Calhoun property enjoys no primary importance as far as the rationale for civil government is concerned.

Brown's argument notwithstanding, it seems feasible to argue for the indirect yet strong presence of property in the *Disquisition* in the Lockean sense and its explicit role in Calhoun's system in general. In the first place, similarly to Locke, Calhoun also defined government as a body with the main purpose of protecting property, and thus he assumed society as a community of property holders. The

³⁰ Ellis 1993, 30; Zuckert 1994, 256.

³¹ Laslett, introduction to Locke 1991, 103, 112; Zuckert 1996, 111.

³² Brown 2000, 217, 76, 134; see also 40.

South Carolinian held that it was the government's duty to protect property; "with most of its institutions [it was] intended to protect life and property".³³ Moreover, even those outside civil society had the opportunity to become part of it by acquiring property through hard work. In the second place, although the word "property" does not occur in the *Disquisition*, its surrogate indeed does and quite in the Lockean sense. In Calhoun's work, the issue of property is expressed through the Lockean labour theory of value, in relation to the problem of government and progress.³⁴

It is in the context of his discussing liberty and equality that Calhoun addresses the problem of property. With him, the natural inequality of human condition based on the different levels of moral and intellectual development is the basis of the unequal degrees of liberty. This, at the same time, is a motive for the individual's development: to acquire more liberty, people are compelled to achieve moral and intellectual improvement. In contrast to Locke, for Calhoun, it is the social or political state in which individuals naturally exist, and where they can best develop their faculties, improve their condition and rise "in the scale of liberty". This is why he assigns a twofold role to government, which is similar to the one assigned by Locke: government is designed "to preserve and perfect society". For Calhoun, as for Locke, one of the major aims of government is to protect the fruits of one's labour, with property among them; in Calhoun's words: "to secure to all the *fruits of their exertions*".³⁵ These "fruits of exertion" which come into being through the creative power of liberty and progress, also need to be protected – otherwise liberty and its resulting benefits would be pointless.

Calhoun makes clear that progress does involve the notion of material aggrandisement, the protection of which he argues within the framework of the Lockean individualist conception of property should be an important element of politics: therefore, "to deprive [individuals] of the *fruits of their exertions*, would be to destroy the desire of bettering their condition".³⁶ Hence, the original twofold function of government works in this case as well: progress or perfection simply cannot form the basis of social existence without the principle of protection, the protection of the fruits of labour, and development. The lack of security for property would

³³ February 4, 1836, Calhoun 1959-2003, XIII. 62; see also Calhoun 1959-2003, XVI. 358; and Garson 1985, 210.

³⁴ Historian Richard N. Current has connected Calhoun's use of the labor theory of value to the Marxian notion of the exploitation of labor, unaware of the contradiction between the two. Current 1963, 44, 87-88. Current's argument is concerned with Calhoun's justification of depriving the slave of his property as in the case of the laboring classes. Calhoun's problem, however, pertains to the exchange of property as the fruits of one's labor with or without consent. He employed the labor theory of value in the Lockean liberal sense in order to defend owners' right in movable and immovable property, as well as in slavery.

³⁵ Calhoun 2003, 9, 38. (first and last quotations); see also 36; my emphasis.

³⁶ Calhoun 2003, 39; my emphasis.

undermine the drive for progress. Improving one's condition by means of moral and intellectual development involves the acquisition and protection of the fruits of one's labour.

Calhoun also addressed the problem of property as related to labour in the Lockean spirit elsewhere, in other contexts. He similarly employed the Lockean conception of property rights during the Nullification Controversy, when anti-tariff Carolinians denounced the tariff of 1828 as inimical to their properties. In 1828, the South Carolina state legislature appointed a special committee to prepare a document of protest against the federal protective tariff, justifying South Carolina's position on the issue. It was also commissioned to explore the problems the protective act caused and to suggest a possible remedy for South Carolina's grievances. The committee submitted its report entitled *Exposition* to the House of Representatives on 19 December 1828. It was based on a draft prepared by Calhoun, which I will use for my analysis below.³⁷

The federal tariff law of 1828 raised the duties on imported manufactured goods from an average of 33.33 percent to 50 percent on average, thereby forcing domestic consumers to purchase them at higher prices. At the same time, since the tariff was introduced as part of an attempt to protect and foster home manufacturing, it had the discriminatory effect of benefiting Northern producers, who had to face foreign competition, and disfavoured Southern consumers, who had no significant capacity for industrial production.³⁸ Asserting the unconstitutional nature of the tariff grounded in strict constructionism as well as the right for individual states to declare such laws null and void, the document claimed nullification as a legitimate way for South Carolina to deal with the federal measure.

In his draft of the *Exposition*, Calhoun denounces the tariff on the grounds that by making imported goods more expensive for southerners to buy, it drains their financial resources and moves their "property annually to other sections of the country".³⁹ Employing argument grounded in the Lockean individualist conception of property he claims: "Our complaint is that we are not permitted to consume *the fruits of our labour*, but that, through an artful and complex system, in violation of every principle of justice, they are transferred from us to others."⁴⁰ Here, Locke's ideas about the violation of property rights by a tyrannical government appear in a modified form: for Calhoun, it is the federal government that abuses power by taxing southerners without their consent, making them pay higher prices for imported goods because of the tariff duties, thereby depriving them of the fruits of their labor.

³⁷ Editor's introduction to the South Carolina *Exposition and Protest*, Calhoun 1959–2003, X. 442–43; Calhoun 1959–2003, X. 444–534.

³⁸ Freehling 1992, 138.

³⁹ Calhoun 1959–2003, X. 464.

⁴⁰ Calhoun 1959–2003, X. 464–66; emphasis added; see also Calhoun 1959–2003, XII. 65.

In claiming protection for property on the basis of the labour theory of value, Calhoun thus followed a tradition that was essentially tied up with Lockean premises. By employing Locke's labour theory of value, Calhoun adopted an important element of the former's theory of property together with the notion of government as its protector. Calhoun's individualistic version of the Lockean concept was designed, to protect the fruits of labour acquired by the self.⁴¹

Conclusion

For all the scholarly claims about Calhoun's explicitly refuting major tenets of Lockean political philosophy, primarily natural rights, he, as we have seen, drew extensively upon Locke's arguments about rationality and self-government, or property, fundamental components of that philosophy. He applied them, first and foremost, to defend local interests vis-à-vis the federal government. All this is not to assert that Calhoun embraced Locke's concept of the state of nature and natural rights for individuals, yet he did adopt elements of the latter's political philosophy with important implications.

Such a reading of Calhoun's relationship to Lockean liberalism is not to downplay the problem of consistency and coherence as far as this relationship is concerned. I have had no intention above to ignore contradictions and slip over the apparent discrepancies between the two thinkers' systems.⁴² At the same time, awareness of these discrepancies should not serve to hinder the uncovering of components of the Lockean system in Calhoun's thought.

Furthermore, Calhoun's case attests to the validity of Pocock's characterisation of political languages, which explains the South Carolinian's reverting to Lockean liberalism. Being part of a political community in which Lockean ideals ranked high, Calhoun could not fully isolate himself from the paradigmatic power of liberalism.⁴³ He borrowed from it as an institutionalised language which exerted control of his own discourse without being aware of it. As Pocock explains, "Each of us speaks with many voices, like a tribal shaman in whom the ancestor ghosts are talking at one; when we speak, we are not sure who is talking or what is being said, and our acts of power in communication are not wholly our own."⁴⁴

Since a political language and its idioms can be considered "multivalent", that is, they can be put to different uses and meanings generated through them may vary according to context,⁴⁵ Calhoun had no difficulty applying idioms from Locke's

⁴¹ Calhoun's argument was in harmony with the more general proslavery claim about the rightful appropriation of the slave's labor in return for the master's care. See Ericson 2000, 21–22.

⁴² On the problem of the 'mythology' of coherence in intellectual history, which denotes the effort to identify coherence in an author's system at all costs, see Skinner 1969, 16–22.

⁴³ Pocock 1985, 2, 8; Pocock 1989, 25; Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment Revisited*, 51.

⁴⁴ Pocock 1984, 29.

⁴⁵ Pocock 1989, 21.

“vocabulary” originally meant to support different purposes than his own, rooted in a system that the South Carolinian otherwise flatly rejected.

Finally, Calhoun’s employment of these elements of Lockean liberalism also makes testimony both to its power in early nineteenth Century American political discourse as well as his ability to use them for his own purposes while rejecting other liberal premises. In this way, Calhoun’s political rhetoric was not simply a manifestation of republican discourse but also contained elements of Lockean liberalism which he was able to utilise because of their independence from the natural / social state dichotomy.

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