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The Construction and Realization of the Lockean Common Good

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Abstract

The Lockean common good is a question of both politics and ethics. Examining how property rights in their broad Lockean sense are realized, this article develops a normative account of common prosperity. It argues that, within Locke's theory of property, the common good brings political community and individual good into alignment. Its purpose is to secure the life, liberty, and possessions of every member of the community through political institutions. The Lockean common good is therefore instrumental: it consists in the shared institutional conditions that protect individual natural rights, while remaining subject to the natural-law obligation to preserve others. This account provides a basis for understanding the relationship among the protection of property rights, wealth creation, and social obligations in the pursuit of common prosperity.

Keywords

Common Good; Property Rights; Community

1. Introduction

Locke is widely regarded as a foundational figure in modern theories of private property. In Two Treatises of Government, he begins with the natural right of self-preservation, identifies life, liberty, and property as natural rights that precede political society, and appeals to labour to justify private appropriation. Yet he also maintains that political power must take the public good as both its end and its limit, insisting that it 'hath no other end but preservation'. This raises a question that merits closer examination: how can a theory of property grounded in individual natural rights also accommodate the common good? Is the common good a collective interest external to private rights, or does it consist in the shared conditions under which individual natural rights can be realized?

Existing scholarship has developed divergent interpretations of Locke's theory of property. Macpherson characterizes Locke's political theory in terms of 'possessive individualism', emphasizing the centrality of private appropriation and individual interest. James Tully, by contrast, approaches property through natural law and

social relations, stressing its social functions. Their disagreement suggests that understanding Locke's theory requires more than an explanation of the legitimacy of private appropriation. It also requires an account of the relationship between individual property rights, the preservation of others, social cooperation, and the common good. Alongside the longstanding debate over Locke's individualism, the role of the common good in connecting natural property rights to political community calls for further clarification.

This article argues that the key to the Lockean common good lies in the natural-law relationship between self-preservation and the preservation of others. Self-preservation grounds the legitimacy of property rights, but individuals are also obliged to preserve others whenever doing so does not conflict with their own preservation. Labour, charity, and inheritance further demonstrate that property rights are situated within interpersonal relations from the outset. The appropriation of natural resources through labour already requires coordination with others' rights of use; charity expresses a direct responsibility for others' preservation; and inheritance extends the exercise of property rights across generations. The introduction of money expands the possibilities of accumulation and makes property relations increasingly complex. Yet the state of nature lacks a commonly acknowledged judge and a unified power of enforcement. Reliance on individual judgement and private enforcement of natural law cannot provide natural rights with stable protection. Political community thus becomes the institutional means of securing those rights, and the common good becomes the end and boundary of political power. On this reading, the Lockean common good is not an independent interest standing above individual rights. It consists in the shared institutional conditions that reliably secure the life, liberty, and possessions of the community's members. The argument proceeds through four stages: the natural-law foundations of property rights, their social dimensions, their institutional protection, and the normative structure of the common good. It then considers the implications of this account for the relationship among property rights, wealth creation, and social obligations in a normative understanding of common prosperity.

2. The Natural Right of Self Preservation as the Basis of Property Rights

For most early modern natural-law theorists, the state of nature provides the conceptual starting point for establishing the existence and legitimacy of natural rights. Locke follows this tradition in Two Treatises of Government, introducing the state of nature as the setting for his justification of property rights. Rather than treating property as a right created by political community or positive law, he grounds it in the natural right of self-preservation through the relationship between God as maker and human beings as his workmanship. As Leo Strauss observes, the natural right to property follows from the fundamental right of self-preservation; it

does not originate in a contract or an act of society.

Bodily survival is the most basic dimension of self-preservation. For Locke, the relationship between God and humanity is that between a maker and what he has made. God creates all life, while human beings are 'the workmanship of one omnipotent, and infinitely wise maker' and 'the servants of one sovereign master'. As God's workmanship, they have no right arbitrarily to destroy their own lives. God has not only implanted in them a strong desire for self-preservation but has also provided food, clothing, and other necessities of life. Human beings therefore have a right to use whatever is necessary or useful to their continued existence. Self-preservation is consequently more than a factual desire to survive: it supplies the natural-law basis for acquiring and using external goods. From birth, people have a right to preservation and, accordingly, to food, drink, and whatever else nature provides for their subsistence.

Self-preservation depends not only on bodily survival, sustained by food, drink, and other natural provisions, but also on equality among persons. Locke adopts an account of human beings as God's workmanship that differs sharply from Filmer's. This account does more than establish an obligation to the creator to preserve human life. In identifying every person as God's property, it also affirms natural equality. Because all are the workmanship of the same omnipotent and infinitely wise maker, and servants of the same sovereign master, Locke holds that no natural subordination among them can be presumed. Natural equality means both that no one possesses an inherent political right to rule others and that every person's life and conditions of preservation receive equal protection under natural law. On this basis, Locke maintains that no one may arbitrarily harm another's life, health, liberty, or possessions. He also defines the state of nature as one of 'perfect freedom': within the bounds of natural law, individuals may direct their own actions and dispose of their persons and possessions without another's permission or dependence on another's will. This freedom, however, is not unrestricted licence. Precisely because individuals have no right to destroy their own lives, they cannot contractually place themselves under someone else's absolute and arbitrary power. A person who lacks power over their own life cannot, by agreement or consent, become another's slave or authorize another to take that life at will. Liberty is thus not a right detached from self-preservation; it is a necessary condition of preserving oneself in accordance with natural law.

Locke's concept of property therefore extends beyond external wealth to encompass life and liberty, all of which serve human preservation. Property rights are not wholly created by society, government, or positive law; they have a natural-law foundation that precedes political society. This does not mean, however, that Locke regards them as purely self-interested or unlimited individual rights. In his theory, the obligation to preserve oneself and the obligation to preserve others share the same normative basis. Since all human beings are God's workmanship and possess

equal natural standing, each must preserve not only themselves but also, wherever their own preservation does not conflict with doing so, the rest of humanity as far as they can. Although property rights begin with individual self-preservation, they are constrained from the outset by an obligation to preserve others. Self-preservation cannot be pursued at the expense of others' life, liberty, and possessions. This connection does not first arise upon entry into political society; it is already present at the level of natural law.

3. The Social Dimensions of Property Rights and Ethical Community

As the preceding discussion shows, self-preservation supplies the natural-law foundation of Locke's concept of property. It does not, however, authorize individuals to pursue their interests in complete isolation from others. Natural law requires them both to preserve themselves and, insofar as their own preservation is not jeopardized, to preserve others as far as possible. Although individuals are the bearers of property rights, those rights are embedded from the outset in a normative structure connecting them to others' rights and interests. Labour, charity, and inheritance make this structure especially clear. Labour explains how common resources become private property and reveals the connection between the creation of private wealth and the growth of social wealth. Charity subjects private property rights to the claims of others' basic subsistence. Inheritance extends property rights into enduring relationships of responsibility among family members.

3.1. Labour

Starting from the natural right of self-preservation, Locke must first explain how natural resources held in common can become private property. Although God gave the world to humanity in common, natural resources could scarcely sustain human life if using them always required the prior consent of everyone. Locke therefore insists that there must be some means of appropriating them. Fruit or venison can sustain a person only when it becomes their own, excluding others from continuing to assert an equal claim to it. Unlike Grotius and Pufendorf, however, Locke does not make consent the basis for transforming common resources into individual holdings. Instead, he treats labour as the principal means of separating private property from the common stock and acquiring a title to it. Although human beings are God's workmanship, they remain free persons with authority over their own bodies. As Locke writes, 'The labour of his body, and the work of his hands, we may say, are properly his. Whatsoever then he removes out of the state that nature hath provided, and left it in, he hath mixed his labour with, and joined to it something that is his own, and thereby makes it his property.'

Labour's status as a basic condition of private acquisition does not, however, establish that Locke's account of property is a form of possessive individualism in

Macpherson's sense. For Locke, property rights are never independent of a social function. First, labour is cooperative rather than isolated: it forms part of a social division of labour. Tully accordingly suggests that Locke's labourer resembles a participant in the household-based society reconstructed by Karl Polanyi more closely than an abstract possessive individual. Even an ordinary loaf of bread embodies the efforts of countless people. Locke explains that 'it is not barely the plough-man's pains, the reaper's and thresher's toil, and the baker's sweat, is to be counted into the bread we eat'; the labour of those who train oxen, extract and work iron and stone, and prepare timber for ploughs, mills, ovens, and other implements must also be included in the account of labour required to turn seed into bread.

Second, labour does more than provide individuals with food and clothing for their own use: it can increase the goods available to society as a whole. Cultivation offers Locke's central example: 'he who appropriates land to himself by his labour, does not lessen, but increase the common stock of mankind'. An acre of enclosed and cultivated land, he argues, produces at least ten times the provisions yielded by an equally fertile acre left uncultivated in common. Someone who obtains more necessities from ten cultivated acres than from a hundred uncultivated acres can therefore be said to give ninety acres to humanity: labour makes ten acres supply what previously required a hundred. Labour with this social value is not confined to physical exertion; it also includes intellectual work. Indeed, in Locke's account, intellectual work can contribute even more than manual labour. He writes: 'He that first invented printing, discovered the use of the compass, or made public the virtue and right use of kin kina, did more for the propagation of knowledge, for the supply and increase of useful commodities, and saved more from the grave, than those who built colleges, workhouses, and hospitals.' Labour can thus be understood not simply as a means of individual appropriation but also as a source of communal consciousness. As Wang Nan argues, a society built on industriousness and a cooperative division of labour forms a whole in which dispersed individual capacities complement one another, combining into a greater collective capacity that improves life for all.

3.2. Charity and Inheritance

Scholars have long summarized Locke's theory of ownership in terms of a principle of ownership through labour, treating labour as the basis on which rational beings acquire property rights. This captures only part of his account. Alongside property acquired through labour, Locke identifies two further routes to property: charity and inheritance. Natural law obliges individuals to preserve themselves, but when their own preservation is secure, it also requires them to preserve the rest of humanity as far as they can.

Charity most directly expresses the constraints that others' subsistence needs impose on private property rights. It gives those who have no other means of

sustaining themselves a claim to enough of another's surplus to escape extreme want. Where someone cannot otherwise survive, it is sinful for a person of means to withhold relief from their abundance and allow that person to starve. God, as the lord and father of all, has not granted any individual such exclusive ownership of worldly goods as to extinguish a needy person's claim to the surplus required for subsistence. Inheritance reveals the social character of property through family relations: children have a right to goods belonging to their parents. Although Locke rejects Filmer's account of patriarchal government in Two Treatises of Government, he does not thereby deny the significance of the family. Parents must raise and support their children. Their obligation extends beyond bare survival to providing, as far as their means allow, the conveniences and comforts of life. Nor does parental death bring the claims arising from that obligation entirely to an end: children have a natural right to inherit their parents' property.

Charity and inheritance give the acquisition of private property through labour a richer social meaning. Acquisition serves not only one's own subsistence and development but also the claims of others, both within the present generation and across generations, to share in the wealth one holds. Human beings are thus no longer understood as isolated individuals in a state of nature. They stand in ethical relations with one another and gradually form an ethical community of mutual assistance, encompassing both present and future generations.

4. Political Community as the Institutional Safeguard of Property Rights

4.1. The Limits of Ethical Community

In discussing the realization of property rights, Locke does not explicitly describe human beings as having ceased to be isolated individuals in the state of nature and come to inhabit a distinct ethical community. Nevertheless, the modes of acquisition he identifies—labour, charity, and inheritance—consistently exhibit a social character. In this sense, Strauss understands Locke's state of nature as a social condition.Rousseau, for his part, criticizes earlier theorists of the state of nature for projecting ideas acquired in society onto that condition.

The emergence of money, however, stimulates acquisitive desires and makes this form of ethical community difficult to sustain. As Tully describes the transition, a condition free from quarrels and disputes gives way to competition for more land, encroachment on others' holdings, and the expansion of possessions. The reasons become clearer when we consider the two natural-law constraints Locke places on accumulation before the introduction of money: the sufficiency proviso and the spoilage proviso. The former requires those who appropriate part of the common stock through labour to leave enough, and as good, for others to acquire through their own labour. The latter limits legitimate acquisition to goods that will not spoil in the owner's possession before they can be used. These principles tightly constrain

acquisitive desires, limiting holdings of land and goods to what people need to sustain themselves. Even when individuals acquire more than they require, they can give perishable necessities to others or exchange them for more durable goods. Pre-monetary society thus resembles the mythic golden age: a condition of equality and virtue in which few disputes call for adjudication and there is 'no need of many laws to decide them, or variety of officers to superintend the process, or look after the execution of justice, where there were but few trespasses, and few offenders'.

Money disrupts this condition of equal access to property, rendering the spoilage proviso largely ineffective as a constraint on distributive injustice. Driven by desire and greed, people no longer remain content with what they need but seek unlimited accumulation, placing the sufficiency proviso under pressure as well. The economic problem known as the tragedy of the commons illustrates this difficulty. On this reading of Locke, when goods and wealth cease to circulate evenly within a society sustained by productive labour, and instead become subject to the fancies and avarice of a few—serving speculation or the domination and oppression of others—the resulting arrangements lead towards a Hobbesian condition of conflict. They undermine the proper relationship between labour and property.

4.2. The Formation of Political Community

The transformation of community reflects the changing circumstances of individuals. Members of an ethical community come to recognize that their individual executive power to punish others cannot adequately protect their property rights, while ethical relations alone cannot regulate conflicts among private interests. Unlike political community, ethical community lacks common adjudicative laws and political authority. The transition to political community is therefore not an unconscious social development but a necessary choice for securing the basic natural rights to life, liberty, and possessions. Political community is created as an instrument for overcoming the difficulties of ethical community: its purpose is to protect those rights.

Unlike ethical communities such as the family, political community does not arise naturally from instinct or affection. For Locke, its formation and continued existence depend on rational agreement. Individuals must consent to constitute a political community and surrender their natural powers: the power to act as they judge necessary for their own preservation and that of others becomes subject to the community's laws, while the power to punish is entrusted to public authority. Locke regards these terms as necessary. A person entering political society enjoys the advantages of others' labour, assistance, and company, together with the protection of the community's collective strength. Accordingly, 'he is to part also with as much of his natural liberty, in providing for himself, as the good, prosperity, and safety of the society shall require'.

At the same time, members of political society must place particular emphasis on

limiting the laws and political powers that adjudicate their disputes. Otherwise, the abuse of that authority may violate citizens' rights and turn the community into what Marx calls an illusory community. For this reason, Locke introduces the public good as the governing principle for the regulation of property by law and political power, taking the place, in this account, of the sufficiency and spoilage provisos that constrain appropriation in the earlier stage. Although individuals surrender their natural equality, liberty, and executive power to society, to be regulated by the legislature as the good of society requires, they do so only to preserve themselves, their liberty, and their property more effectively. No rational creature can be presumed to change its condition with the intention of making it worse. Hence 'the power of the society, or legislative constituted by them, can never be supposed to extend farther, than the common good', and must secure each person's property. If the legislature frustrates the purposes for which people entered political society and betrays the trust placed in it, the people retain a right of revolution or resistance to tyranny. They 'have a right to resume their original liberty, and, by the establishment of a new legislative, (such as they shall think fit) provide for their own safety and security'.

The common good thus constitutes both the purpose and the limit of political power. Political community acquires legitimate authority over individuals because that authority secures their life, liberty, and possessions in peace and safety. Yet public power may not arbitrarily dispose of private possessions in the community's name. Since the protection of property is the very purpose for which people enter political society, the supreme power may not take anyone's property without consent. The common good therefore has a dual function: it provides institutional protection for individual rights through political community, and it sets the boundaries of legitimate political power so that its exercise remains directed towards that protective purpose.

5. The Normative Structure and Contemporary Significance of the Lockean Common Good

5.1. Realizing Individual Good through Political Community

In Locke's account of the formation of political society, the common good is not an independent end standing above individual good. People already possess natural rights to life, liberty, and property before entering political society. They leave the state of nature and form a political community not to pursue a communal interest separate from those rights, but because the state of nature lacks a commonly acknowledged law, an impartial judge, and effective enforcement capable of securing them. Political community is the institutional form through which these deficiencies are overcome. Its purpose remains the more secure preservation of its members' life, liberty, and possessions.

It is in this sense that Locke establishes the common good as the end and limit of

political power. The common good does not require individual good to be subordinated to an independent good of the community. Political community is not itself the ultimate end; its legitimacy depends on whether it can more effectively protect the natural rights individuals already possess. To 'realize' individual good through political community is therefore not primarily to authorize political power to decide what is good on individuals' behalf. It is to provide, through common laws, impartial adjudication, and public enforcement, the stable protection of life, liberty, and possessions that is difficult to obtain in the state of nature. The common good denotes a political order whose institutional form is political community and whose ultimate purpose is the protection of individual natural rights.

John Finnis's analysis of the common good offers a framework for understanding this relationship. In his discussion of the political common good, Finnis identifies several important elements: punishing violations of just laws in the interests of justice; coercively restraining unjust conduct, including omissions, that threatens others' interests, particularly interests recognized as moral or legal rights; providing remedies, compensation, and restitution for the infringement of rights; and establishing and maintaining a system of possession or property that respects the various interests people have in their holdings, whether immediate and vested or prospective and contingent. These elements belong specifically to political community or to the responsibilities of political leaders and government. That fact does not make them basic human goods, however, or establish the political common good as a non-instrumental good. Political community has value because it provides the political conditions necessary for its members to pursue and realize basic goods, rather than because the community itself is an ultimate good. Finnis thus understands the political common good as instrumental.

Finnis's conception of instrumental good has affinities with Locke's position. Both regard political community as a necessary means of addressing disorder in property relations within ethical community and of enabling each member to develop their capacities. Locke, however, concentrates more directly on the origins and scope of political power. His account, as reconstructed here, moves from individuals in the state of nature, through their association in ethical community, to their agreement to form a political community when ethical relations prove unable to regulate conflicts among private interests. Political community does not stand opposed to individuals or ethical community; it arises to remedy their limitations. Its primary significance lies in its obligations, rather than simply in its possession of power. Locke's definition makes this orientation explicit: 'POLITICAL POWER, then, I take to be a RIGHT of making laws with penalties of death, and consequently all less penalties, for the regulating and preserving of property, and of employing the force of the community, in the execution of such laws, and in the defence of the commonwealth from foreign injury; and all this only for the public good.'

The common good thus expresses a conjunction of community and good. In Locke's

theory of property, it takes the form of realizing individual good through political community. It is neither an independent entity irreducible to individual good nor a utilitarian aggregate of individual goods. Rather, it is fundamentally continuous with individual good, understood in terms of natural rights and rights of private property. The most basic purpose of political association is therefore to protect individual good so that every member—not merely a privileged class—can attain the independence characteristic of civil life. As Tully explains, the common good results from applying the natural end of preservation to political society: to realize it is to secure everyone's life, liberty, and possessions.

5.2. Self Preservation and the Preservation of Others

Locating the ultimate purpose of the common good in individual good does not mean that Locke identifies individual good with unrestricted private interest. In his natural-law framework, self-preservation and the preservation of others are present together from the outset. Natural law requires each person to preserve themselves and accordingly grants natural rights to life, liberty, and property. At the same time, because all possess equal natural standing, each must preserve the rest of humanity as far as possible whenever their own preservation is not jeopardized. Although individual good is the ultimate orientation of the common good, it is neither isolated nor exclusively self-regarding: it remains constrained by others' equal claims to preservation.

Self-preservation first requires that political power refrain from arbitrarily sacrificing individual life, liberty, or possessions in the name of a common interest. Individuals enter political society precisely to obtain more stable protection for their rights. Membership cannot therefore turn what natural law already protects into objects of arbitrary political disposal. Locke places particularly clear limits on the supreme power's authority over private possessions, denying that it may take them without consent. The common good does not allow an abstract public interest to override individual natural rights. It requires, first of all, respect for the rights necessary to individual self-preservation.

Self-preservation does not, however, exhaust the common good. Because natural law also requires the preservation of others, the protection of private rights cannot be understood as an absolute defence of existing holdings. The discussion of charity has already shown that, when others face destitution and cannot sustain their lives, the exclusivity of private property does not extinguish their claims on surplus goods needed for subsistence. This does not negate private property rights. It situates them, like other natural rights, within relations among equal persons who are jointly bound by natural law. One person's preservation cannot be pursued by arbitrarily undermining another's, and property rights cannot become absolute entitlements wholly indifferent to others' basic needs. The Lockean common good therefore contains two interconnected and mutually constraining requirements. Political

community must secure every member's life, liberty, and possessions against arbitrary domination by others, including public authorities. Yet that protection cannot be detached from the natural-law obligation to preserve others. Where interests conflict, the common good cannot simply be equated with one person's private interest; nor can aggregate wealth or the interests of a majority substitute for attention to particular members' natural rights. What makes the good common is that the preservation of every person subject to natural law has normative significance.

Locke's discussion of interest rates illustrates how these two requirements inform the assessment of specific institutions. In Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest, and Raising the Value of Money, he opposes artificially lowering the legal rate of interest to a level inconsistent with the actual supply of and demand for money. His objection concerns not only interference with lenders' and borrowers' ability to dispose of their property according to their own judgement, but also the uneven distribution of the policy's benefits and burdens. An artificially low legal rate may increase the advantages enjoyed by bankers, moneylenders, and skilled financial intermediaries while imposing greater losses on widows, orphans, and those without financial expertise. In this context, Locke argues that the law should take particular care of those least able to care for themselves.

On this reading, Locke's assessment of interest-rate regulation is concerned not only with national wealth but also with how gains and losses are distributed among individuals, especially those least able to protect their own interests. He writes that 'so Trade be not Cramp'd, and the Exportation of our Native Commodities and Manufactures not hindred, it will be no matter to the Kingdom, who amongst our selves Gets or Loses', but immediately adds that'only common Charity teaches, those should be most taken care of by the Law, who are least capable of taking care for themselves'. His argument thus gives the protection of vulnerable members of society a normative significance that cannot be reduced to considerations of aggregate national wealth. Instead, lenders and borrowers should be free to conduct their transactions according to their own judgement, without governmental interference. This freedom does not amount to permission to do whatever one pleases. It is the freedom to direct one's person, actions, possessions, and property within the bounds of the laws to which one is subject. The Lockean common good therefore encompasses both self-preservation and the preservation of others. Individuals are obliged to preserve themselves as well as others: the former obligation is secured by rights to life, liberty, and property, while the latter sets normative limits on the pursuit of private interest. Political community, too, cannot protect only the property rights of the powerful while disregarding the basic conditions that enable other members to lead independent lives. The conjunction of these two obligations distinguishes the Lockean common good from the protection

of private interests alone.

5.3. A Normative Understanding of Common Prosperity

The Lockean common good can deepen our understanding of common prosperity. First, common prosperity need not presuppose a denial of the legitimacy of individual property rights or private wealth. For Locke, property rights arise from the natural requirements of individual self-preservation. Labour converts common resources into private property and enables people to improve their lives through their own activity. Nor does the growth of private wealth necessarily conflict with the common interest. Locke's account of cultivation and the value added by labour shows that productive activity can increase individual wealth while expanding the resources available to society. Common prosperity should therefore not be understood as the simple elimination of differences in private wealth. Still less should equality of outcomes displace recognition of the legitimacy of labour, property rights, and wealth creation. A stable order of property rights, together with opportunities for individuals to improve their lives through labour and invention, provides an important basis for prosperity.

Recognition of private property does not, however, make it an absolute right insulated from the claims of others. Locke's natural law requires individuals both to preserve themselves and, where their own preservation is not threatened, to preserve others as far as they can. Individuals may acquire and accumulate property through labour, but that right cannot be expanded into a freedom wholly indifferent to others' basic subsistence needs. Where others have no means of sustaining themselves, the exclusivity of private property is constrained by the obligation of charity. The legitimacy of property rights and the obligation to preserve others are therefore not mutually exclusive; both belong to Locke's natural law.

In this sense, what is common in common prosperity is not an identical distribution of holdings but a shared concern for every member's basic preservation. Growth in social wealth is a necessary foundation of prosperity, yet an increase in aggregate wealth does not by itself establish that common prosperity has been achieved. If growth chiefly consolidates the advantages of some while others lack the conditions for basic subsistence and an independent standing, the requirement that prosperity be common remains insufficiently fulfilled. Locke's discussion of interest rates likewise shows that economic institutions must be assessed not only by their effects on aggregate wealth and trade but also by their actual consequences for differently situated members of society. Particular attention is owed to the adverse effects borne by those least able to protect themselves.

Political community's role in common prosperity is thus neither to negate private property rights nor simply to distribute social wealth in equal shares. It is to protect legitimate property rights and wealth creation while reconciling the realization of individual rights with the basic preservation of other members. The Lockean

common good offers a twofold normative perspective: prosperity rests on individual liberty, labour, and property rights, while its common character requires that the realization of individual wealth not exclude others' basic preservation. Common prosperity can neither dissolve individual property rights in the name of the common nor invoke property rights to deny the social obligation to preserve others.

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Press, Cambridge, Second Treatise, §§27 and 31. The passage concerning the limited need for laws and officers occurs in §107; for the golden age, see §111.

[21] In 'The Tragedy of the Commons', Garrett Hardin imagines a pasture open to everyone. Each herder's immediate interest is served by increasing the size of their herd. Even if herders know that excessive grazing will degrade the pasture or eventually turn it into desert, the desire to avoid losing out and to secure additional gains encourages each to add more animals. The common pasture is consequently overused, producing a tragedy of the commons.

[22] Locke discusses several forms of ethical association, including conjugal society, the society of parents and children, and the society of masters and servants or slaves. Although these differ in their purposes, binding force, and scope, they share one feature: none possesses legislative power.

[23] Locke, J. (1988) Two Treatises of Government. Laslett, P., Ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Second Treatise, §§128–130; quotation from §130.

[24] 'The good of the society', 'common good', and 'the public good' are treated here as synonymous expressions. Locke uses them to describe the end for which the state is established. The common good is the agreed purpose of legislation and, accordingly, of society itself.

[25] In pre-monetary society, Locke principally uses the sufficiency and spoilage provisos to prevent individuals from harming others through appropriation. In political society, the common good serves to prevent political power from harming individual members.

[26] Locke, J. (1988) Two Treatises of Government. Laslett, P., Ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Second Treatise, §131.

[27] Locke, J. (1988) Two Treatises of Government. Laslett, P., Ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Second Treatise, §222.

[28] Finnis, J. (1994) Liberalism and Natural Law Theory. Mercer Law Review, 45, 687–704.

[29] Finnis distinguishes basic goods by their irreducibility. The list discussed here comprises seven: (1) knowledge of reality, including aesthetic understanding; (2) skilful performance in work and play; (3) bodily life and the integrity of its constituent aspects; (4) friendship, harmony, and association among persons in their different forms and degrees; (5) sexual union between a man and a woman; (6) practical reason; and (7) harmony with the widest reaches and ultimate source of reality, including meaning and value.

[30] Locke, J. (1988) Two Treatises of Government. Laslett, P., Ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Second Treatise, §3.

[31] Tully, J. (1980) A Discourse on Property: John Locke and His Adversaries. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 163.

[32] Locke, J. (1991) Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest, and Raising the Value of Money. In: Kelly, P.H., Ed., Locke on Money, Vol. 1, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 203-342.

[33] Locke, J. (1692) Some Considerations of the Consequences of the Lowering of Interest, and Raising the Value of Money. Printed for Awnsham and John Churchill, London, 13.

[34] Locke, J. (1988) Two Treatises of Government. Laslett, P., Ed., Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, Second Treatise, §57.