



Locke and Rousseau: Two Enlightenment Responses to Honor

By Laurie M. Johnson

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Johnson continues her analysis of the place of honor in modernity with a close examination of honor's treatment by two Enlightenment philosophers: Locke and Rousseau, concluding that Enlightenment thought is inherently problematic when it comes to developing moral obligation. Political scientists, students of philosophy, and communitarians alike will find intriguing questions in this book, which calls on us to recognize the flaws of the Enlightenment liberalism that not only determines how we govern ourselves, but how we think about our family, society, and economy.

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Editorial Review

Review

Anyone who wants to understand the modern liberal denigration of honor and the possible recovery of honor in our liberal world must read Laurie Johnson's book. Her argumentation is clear, incisive, and animated by a spirited love of honor. (Larry Arnhart, Northern Illinois University)

Dr. Johnson's *Locke and Rousseau: Two Enlightenment Responses to Honor* is a classic case of how we can use political philosophy to investigate one of the major challenges of today—how to have honor in a liberal society. With this text, Dr. Johnson has given us a comprehensive background to the modern problem of honor in a liberal society. (Mark Griffith, University of West Alabama)

Laurie Johnson has already established herself as an important voice in the debate over the meaning and value of modern liberalism. With this book, she continues to show us why we must focus on the concept of honor as a guiding thread in our political tradition. As she ably shows, modern liberalism's attempt to remove honor from political life has made it difficult for us to cultivate the civic virtues that make a flourishing community possible. (Michael P. Krom, Saint Vincent College)

In this clear, accessible book, Johnson (Kansas State Univ.) explores the decline of honor in early modern political thought. Expanding the argument of her previous work, *Thomas Hobbes: Turning Point for Honor* (CH, Nov'09, 47-1683), Johnson shows how Locke and Rousseau extend Hobbes's assault on aristocratic notions of honor while attempting to develop a new type of honor for individuals committed to equality. According to Johnson, Locke follows Hobbes in rejecting honor by questioning the naturalness of social position, weakening religious conviction, and replacing duty with privatized self-interest. Rousseau joins Locke in challenging the "pride and destructive vanity" of aristocratic honor, yet seeks to recover the heroic sense of self-sacrifice that is deflated by Lockean liberalism. Yet Rousseau relies on medieval notions of chivalry that are at odds with modern commitments to gender equality. The central question of Johnson's study is this: "Can liberalism be made compatible with any type of honor code?" Although she hints at some possible answers, she does not solve this riddle here. Instead she carefully traces the decline of aristocratic honor and the difficulty of finding a replacement in the modern world. **Summing Up:** Recommended. (CHOICE)

About the Author

Laurie M. Johnson is professor of political science at Kansas State University.

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