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1

Introduction

1.1 Locke's Innovative Approach to Debates about Persons and Personal Identity

John Locke develops an innovative account of persons and personal identity. Locke is interested in making sense of questions of moral accountability and argues that we need to distinguish the idea of a person from that of a man (or human being¹ as we would say today) and that of a substance.² For Locke, persons—rather than human beings or substances—will be held accountable and rewarded or punished for their actions in this life and in the life to come. Moral accountability presupposes personal identity. However, what makes a person the same over time? Locke not only aims to explain how a person continues to exist in this life, but as a Christian believer it is important for him to take seriously the possibility of an afterlife and thus he intends to offer an account of personal identity that can explain how a person can continue to exist in the afterlife. Locke argues repeatedly that personal identity consists in sameness of consciousness and his point is that personal identity does not have to coincide with identity of man or identity of substance.³ The significance of Locke's distinction between the ideas of person and man becomes clear when we consider an individual in a coma. Locke would argue that a patient in a coma is the same man (or woman) as before falling into the coma, but not the same person, and it would be unjust to hold someone in a coma accountable for a past crime. Moreover, as we will see, philosophers who identify persons with human beings face problems in explaining the resurrection; these problems do not arise for Locke's account of personal

³ See II.xxvii.9-26. Locke's distinction between the ideas of person, man, and substance can already be found in an early manuscript note. See John Locke, 'Identy [sic] of Persons,' (Bodleian Libraries MS

Locke f.7, 5 June 1683), 107.

¹ Here and in the following I use Locke's term 'man' interchangeably with 'human being.'

² For Locke, the idea of a person stands for 'a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places' (II. xxvii.9). Moreover, he holds that 'Person... is a Forensick Term appropriating Actions and their Merit; and so belongs only to intelligent agents capable of a Law, and Happiness and Misery.' (II.xxvii.26) Although Locke's idea of man is often taken to stand for a human organism, this is only one way to understand what is meant by 'man' and Locke considers alternative meanings in II.xxvii.21, which I will discuss further in subsequent chapters. According to Locke, we use the idea of substance to denote an underlying substratum from which our various ideas associated with the substance under consideration result. We suppose the substratum to exist, since we cannot imagine how the various simple ideas subsist by themselves (see II.xxiii.1). Locke's claim that we have to distinguish the idea of a person from that of a substance remains neutral on the further metaphysical question of whether a person at a time is a substance.

identity. However, can Locke explain the resurrection and life after death without presupposing the continued existence of an immaterial substance? According to Locke, God 'will restore us to the like state of Sensibility in another World' (IV. iii.6) and the mere presence of an immaterial substance does not ensure that resurrected beings will be sensible beings that are capable of happiness or misery. Thus, Locke believes that '[a]ll the great Ends of Morality and Religion, are well enough secured, without philosophical Proofs of the Soul's Immateriality' (IV. iii.6). My study intends to show how Locke offers an account of persons and personal identity that is well suited for his moral and religious purposes.

His views about persons and personal identity were widely discussed soon after their publication and continue to influence debates about personal identity. In present-day debates Locke's view is often seen as an early version of psychological accounts of personal identity.⁵ Since Locke argues repeatedly that personal identity consists in same consciousness, it is plausible to regard his account of personal identity as psychological. However, his account of persons and personal identity is richer. Locke not only argues that personal identity consists in same consciousness, but he also claims that 'person' is a forensic term,6 meaning that persons are moral and legal beings that are accountable for their actions. In the following I argue that both claims are central for understanding Locke's position and show how they are intertwined. In order to understand how Locke links his forensic account of personhood with his psychological account of personal identity, it is helpful to understand his approach to persons and personal identity within the framework of his general approach to questions of identity, which I call kind-dependent. By taking the kind-dependent framework seriously we will see that it is important to consider Locke's account of personhood separately from his account of personal identity. A close examination of Locke's account of personhood will establish that Lockean persons are moral and legal beings, or, in other words, subjects of accountability. Moreover, I bring to light that he holds particular—and controversial—moral background beliefs, which explain why he regards sameness of consciousness as necessary for personal identity. I examine how Locke understands sameness of consciousness and show how my reading

⁴ Similar considerations can already be found in a manuscript note on immortality dating back to 1682. See Locke, *Early Draft*, 121–3.

⁵ For instance, see Michael Ayers, Locke: Epistemology and Ontology, 2 vols. (London and New York: Routledge, 1991), 2:278–92; Harold W. Noonan, Personal Identity, 2nd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2003), 9–11; Derek Parfit, Reasons and Persons (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 204–9; Jennifer Whiting, 'Personal Identity: The Non-Branching Form of "What Matters", in The Blackwell Guide to Metaphysics, ed. Richard M. Gale (Oxford and Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers, 2002). It is worth noting that neo-Lockean accounts of personal identity are not the only way to develop Locke's view. For instance, Carol Rovane regards Locke's view as a source of inspiration for her own normative account of personal identity. See Carol Rovane, 'From a Rational Point of View,' Philosophical Topics 30 (2002); Carol Rovane, The Bounds of Agency: An Essay in Revisionary Metaphysics (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998).

⁶ See II.xxvii.26.

provides resources to respond to problems commonly associated with Locke's account of personal identity such as the problems of circularity and transitivity. Furthermore, I argue that we can reveal the strengths of Locke's same consciousness account if we consider it in the context of metaphysical and religious debates of his predecessors. Considering Locke's views about persons and personal identity within his broader philosophical project brings to light how his moral, religious, metaphysical, and epistemic background beliefs shape his thinking about persons and personal identity.

My interpretive approach is rooted in Locke's position that human cognitive capacities are limited. This means that many metaphysical propositions remain unknown to us.⁷ The lesson for Locke is that we should use our capacities for enquiries that they are suited for and focus on morality and religion:

From whence it is obvious to conclude, that since our Faculties are not fitted to penetrate into the internal Fabrick and real Essences of Bodies; but yet plainly discover to us the Being of a GOD, and the Knowledge of our selves, enough to lead us into a full and clear discovery of our Duty, and great Concernment, it will become us, as rational Creatures, to imploy those Faculties we have about what they are most adapted to, and follow the direction of Nature, where it seems to point us out the way. For 'tis rational to conclude, that our proper Imployment lies in those Enquiries, and in that sort of Knowledge, which is most suited to our natural Capacities, and carries in it our greatest interest, *i.e.* the Condition of our eternal Estate. Hence I think I may conclude, that *Morality* is the proper Science, and Business of Mankind in general. (IV.xii.11)

In addition to showing how Locke's views about persons and personal identity are situated within his broader philosophical project, my work brings to light how Locke advances the debates of his predecessors by bringing together moral debates about personhood with metaphysical and religious debates about the afterlife and the resurrection in a unique and novel way. Locke is not the first philosopher to regard persons as moral and legal beings. He is familiar with the natural law tradition—a tradition that regards persons (or in Latin *personae*) as bearers of rights and duties. This moral and legal conception of a person can be

⁷ It is worth noting that Locke does not reject metaphysical knowledge entirely. For instance, he accepts that we can know that God exists (see IV.x), or that substances exist (see Locke, *Works*, 4:32–3).

⁸ Locke wrote *Essays on the Law of Nature* around 1663–64 and delivered them as lectures at Christ Church College, Oxford. Locke never published the essays during his lifetime, despite encouragement to do so. For the role of persons in natural law theory see, for instance, Samuel Pufendorf, *Of the Law of Nature and Nations*, ed. Jean Barbeyrac, trans. Basil Kennett and George Carew, The fourth edition, carefully corrected. (London: printed for J. Walthoe, R. Wilkin, J. and J. Bonwicke, S. Birt, T. Ward, and T. Osborne, 1729), especially I.i. For further discussion, see Stephen Buckle, *Natural Law and the Theory of Property: Grotius to Hume* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), chs. 1–3; Knud Haakonssen,

further traced back to Roman law. Originally the Latin term 'persona' denoted a mask, role, or guise, and later it acquired a moral and legal meaning and started referring to bearers of rights and duties.⁹

Locke's eighteenth-century commentator Edmund Law emphasizes Locke's claim that 'person' is a forensic term and additionally Law argues for the view that persons are modes rather than substances in his A Defence of Mr Locke's Opinion concerning Personal Identity.10 In support of the latter he quotes Cicero, who in Pro Sulla regards a person [persona] as a role or guise imposed [imposuit] on a human being. 11 This intimates that Law assumes that the original Latin meaning of persona as 'standing for a certain guise, character, quality'12 is still present in Locke. 13 Although a number of interpreters have revived Edmund Law's interpretation and argued that Locke's conception of a person should be understood in the Ciceronian and Pufendorfian tradition, 14 I believe that we cannot assume that Locke directly adopts a conception of a person as held by Roman authors or proponents of natural law theory, but rather he revises it so that it can be integrated into his philosophical project as a whole. This is not surprising, because Locke, in contrast to many of his predecessors, is more cautious to endorse metaphysical claims that exceed the boundaries of human understanding and remains agnostic about many metaphysical truths that we cannot know with certainty. Moreover, Locke intends to offer an account of personal identity that can make sense of the possibility of the afterlife, the resurrection, and a last judgement. His concern is to show that persons, rather than human beings or substances, can continue to exist

Natural Law and Moral Philosophy: From Grotius to the Scottish Enlightenment (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), ch. 1; Knud Haakonssen, 'Natural Law and Personhood: Samuel Pufendorf on Social Explanation,' Max Weber Lecture Series, no. 2010/06, http://cadmus.eui.eu/handle/1814/14934; Thiel, The Early Modern Subject, 77–81.

- ⁹ See Udo Thiel, 'Personal Identity,' in *The Cambridge History of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Daniel Garber and Michael Ayers (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1:868–9; Thiel, *The Early Modern Subject*, 26–30, 76–81. Thomas Hobbes comments on the etymology of the term 'person' in Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Lxvi.3, 101. See also Maximilian Forschner, 'Der Begriff Der Person in Der Stoa,' in *Person: Philosophiegeschichte*, *Theoretische Philosophie*, *Praktische Philosophie*, ed. Dieter Sturma (Paderborn: Mentis, 2001).
 - See Law, A Defence of Mr Locke's Opinion Concerning Personal Identity.
 - ¹¹ See Law, A Defence of Mr Locke's Opinion Concerning Personal Identity, 39.
 - ¹² Law, A Defence of Mr Locke's Opinion Concerning Personal Identity, 39.
 - ¹³ A critical response to this reading can be found in Winkler, 'Locke on Personal Identity'.
- ¹⁴ See LoLordo, *Locke's Moral Man*; Strawson, *Locke on Personal Identity*, 17–21; Kathryn Tabb, 'Madness as Method: On Locke's Thought Experiments about Personal Identity,' *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* 26 (2018): 4. Additionally, Thiel acknowledges that the natural law tradition provides important background for Locke's account of personhood. According to Thiel, 'Locke's position is that "man" and "person" denote different abstract ideas which may be applied to the human subject' (*The Early Modern Subject*, 107). Thiel does not argue for the view that Lockean persons are modes, but rather Thiel's reading seems motivated by a Relative Identity interpretation of Locke's general approach to identity. I offer a critical discussion of Relative Identity interpretations in chapter 3. Since Locke does not introduce the idea of a human subject in addition to the ideas of person, man, and substance I do not adopt it either.

in the afterlife. His religious convictions show that he would be reluctant to accept the Ciceronian meaning of *persona* as a role or quality imposed on a human being. On this view a person is dependent on a human being. However, according to Locke, we have to distinguish the ideas of person and man, and sameness of man (or human being) is neither necessary nor sufficient for personal identity. Although Edmund Law thought that Locke's claim that 'person' is a forensic term is connected to the view that persons are modes rather than substances, these two positions do not have to come as a package. Thus, we cannot assume without convincing arguments that Lockean persons are modes. I offer an interpretation that takes seriously Locke's claim that 'person' is a forensic term and ask how Locke intertwines it with his religious beliefs and his agnostic attitudes towards metaphysics in his account of persons and personal identity.

To further illustrate Locke's ingenuity, it can be helpful to contrast Locke's approach to persons and personal identity with the views of Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes introduces a distinction between natural and artificial persons in *Leviathan*, Part I, chapter xvi:

A person, is he, whose words or actions are considered, either as his own, or as representing the words or actions of another man, or of any other thing to whom they are attributed, whether truly or by fiction.

When they are considered as his own, then is he called a *natural person*: and when they are considered as representing the words and actions of another, then is he a *feigned* or *artificial person*. (I.xvi.1–2, 101)

Hobbes needs the notion of an artificial person in addition to a natural person to establish his political project. Locke does not engage with questions of political representation in the context of his discussion of persons and personal identity in the *Essay* and this explains why Locke does not consider artificial persons as Hobbes introduces them, but rather Locke's notion of a person comes closer to Hobbes's conception of a natural person. ¹⁵ Although the details of Hobbes's position need not concern us here, Hobbes's discussion of natural and artificial persons provides interesting background for the interpretation of Locke's views about persons and personal identity. First, Hobbes's distinction shows that the term 'person' can be defined in different ways and we can and should not take for granted that it is simply used interchangeably with the notion of a human being. Locke is well aware of the need to carefully spell out how we understand the idea

¹⁵ See Luc Foisneau, 'Personal Identity and Human Mortality: Hobbes, Locke, Leibniz,' in *Studies on Locke: Sources, Contemporaries, and Legacy*, ed. Sarah Hutton and Paul Schuurman (Dordrecht: Springer, 2008), 95; Thiel, *The Early Modern Subject*, 76–7.

of a person before we can engage with questions of personal identity over time. ¹⁶ This makes it plausible that Locke not only distances his position from views that equate persons with human beings, but also from other definitions of the term 'person' of his day.

Second, it is worth noting that questions of personal identity over time are absent in Hobbes's discussion of persons in *Leviathan*. Nevertheless, Hobbes engages with questions of individuation and identity over time in his work *De Corpore*. ¹⁷ In Part II of this treatise, Hobbes devotes a chapter to 'Of Identity and Difference'. In this chapter Hobbes asks what makes an individual at one time the same as at another time: 'For example, whether a man grown old be the same man he was whilst he was young, or another man; or whether a city be in different ages the same, or another city' (*English Works*, II.xi.7, 1:135). These are exactly the kind of questions that Locke addresses in 'Of Identity and Diversity'. The parallels between Hobbes's and Locke's general approach to questions of identity even go a step further. Hobbes writes:

But we must consider by what name anything is called, when we inquire concerning the *identity* of it. For it is one thing to ask concerning Socrates, whether he be the same man, and another to ask whether he be the same body; for his body, when he is old, cannot be the same it was when he was an infant, by reason of the difference of magnitude; for one body has always one and the same magnitude; yet, nevertheless, he may be the same man. (*English Works*, II.xi.7, 1:137)

Locke agrees that we need to clarify under which sortal¹⁸ name we are considering a thing if we want to address the question of what makes something identical over time. Like Hobbes, Locke distinguishes the term 'mass of matter' from the term 'man' and argues that a man can continue to exist despite changes of material particles.¹⁹

A comparison with Hobbes reveals that Locke makes significant philosophical advancements. Hobbes does not integrate his account of identity with his views about persons. This is a gap in Hobbes's corpus. Locke's chapter 'Of Identity and Diversity' can be seen as filling this gap by applying Locke's general approach to identity over time to persons and personal identity.²⁰

Locke is indebted, first, to the natural law tradition and moral and legal conceptions of personhood, second, to metaphysical debates about individuation and

¹⁶ See II.xxvii.7, 9, 15, 20.

¹⁷ See Hobbes, English Works, 1:132–8. De Corpore [Of Body], is volume 1 of English Works.

¹⁸ Locke introduces the term 'sortal' in III.iii.15 as the adjective deriving from 'sort' in analogy to the adjective 'general' and the noun 'genus.' He uses 'sort' and 'kind' interchangeably. This means that a sortal name is the name that we associate with a kind of being.

¹⁹ See II.xxvii.6-8, see also II.xxvii.1-4.

²⁰ For further discussion see Foisneau, 'Personal Identity and Human Mortality'.

identity, and, third, to metaphysical and religious debates about the state of a person or soul between death and resurrection and in the afterlife. Locke not only builds on the debates of his predecessors, but he also combines them in new and systematic ways by carefully distinguishing the ideas of a person from the ideas of a man and substance.

1.2 Aims and Scope of the Book

Let me add a few remarks about the aims and scope of this book. First and fore-most, this book studies Locke's thinking about persons and personal identity in the philosophical and historical context of his day. My goal is to bring to light Locke's intentions. In particular, I examine how his thinking about persons and personal identity is shaped by his underlying moral, religious, metaphysical, and epistemic views, and where relevant compare them with the views of other philosophers of his day. In this sense my book is a work in the history of philosophy. Although interesting questions can be asked regarding the usefulness of Locke's views for present-day debates about personal identity, they exceed the scope of this project and will not be my concern here. I hope that by considering Locke's account of persons and personal identity in its philosophical and historical context we can better appreciate the ingenuity and strengths of his view. Furthermore, I intend to offer a deeper explanation for why several of Locke's early critics question or reject his account.

It has become common to dismiss Locke's account of personal identity on the basis of a few standard objections such as the famous and widely repeated circularity and transitivity objections. My approach makes it possible to show that Locke's account cannot be as easily dismissed as those who reiterate the common objections tend to do. To illustrate this point, let me explain my approach to the problem of transitivity. Since the objection was not raised during Locke's lifetime we have to speculate as to how he would respond. However, we have evidence that it is of great importance to Locke that his account of persons and personal identity takes seriously the possibility of the afterlife and a last judgement. Thus, I propose that Locke would most likely suggest that the problem of transitivity is best understood in the religious context of an afterlife and a last judgement. Once understood in this context, it is likely that Locke would give preference to a hybrid account of personal identity that involves both transitive and non-transitive relations. The problem with purely non-transitive interpretations is that they conflict with considerations of divine justice, because there is a risk that they involve multiple judgement for the same action, neglect actions, or neglect long-term actions. Purely transitive interpretations neglect the first-personal dimension that is important for Locke. For these reasons, he may have been less worried about the problem of transitivity than his critics who raised or reiterated it. My interpretation of the problem of transitivity is merely one example to show how we can change the interpretation of Locke's view by taking the philosophical and historical context seriously.

Although Locke's chapter 'Of Identity and Diversity' (II.xxvii), which he added to the second edition of his *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* in 1694, is my most important source for this study, I draw on the *Essay* as a whole, as well as his other works and manuscripts whenever they shed light on Locke's views about persons and personal identity. Since Locke contrasts his position with the views of his predecessors, I follow Locke and discuss the views of his predecessors where relevant. My aim is not to offer a comprehensive examination of their views, but rather I approach their works through Locke's perspective with the aim of revealing the strengths of his position in its philosophical and historical context. Udo Thiel has done important and extensive work on the debates about consciousness and personal identity in the early modern period and I would like to refer readers who are interested in further background to his works.²¹

1.3 Summary of Chapters

Chapter 2 offers a close analysis of Locke's approach to questions of individuation and identity over time. I explain that Locke in his chapter 'Of Identity and Diversity' is primarily interested in questions of identity over time in a metaphysical sense. This means we can say that his main task is to specify persistence conditions. I examine how Locke distinguishes individuation from identity, and propose that Locke's approach to identity is best understood as kind-dependent. This chapter provides the framework for the subsequent discussion of Locke's account of persons and personal identity. More precisely, when we apply the kind-dependent approach to persons, it becomes clear that we have to distinguish Locke's account of personhood from his account of personal identity, and examine his account of personhood first before we can specify the persistence conditions for persons in a further step.

Chapter 3 offers further support for why Locke's approach to questions of identity is best interpreted as kind-dependent. In this chapter I turn to the debates that have dominated the secondary literature on Locke's account of identity. I show that alternative interpretations are often based on metaphysical

²¹ See Thiel, *The Early Modern Subject*. See also Thiel, *Lockes Theorie der personalen Identität*; Thiel, 'Individuation'; Thiel, 'Personal Identity'; Udo Thiel, 'Religion and Materialist Metaphysics: Some Aspects of the Debate about the Resurrection of the Body in Eighteenth-Century Britain,' in *Philosophy and Religion in Enlightenment Britain: New Case Studies*, ed. Ruth Savage (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012); Udo Thiel, 'Self-Consciousness and Personal Identity,' in *The Cambridge History of Eighteenth-Century Philosophy*, ed. Knud Haakonssen (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

assumptions that Locke would be reluctant to endorse. I pay particularly close attention to disputes between defenders of coincidence and Relative Identity interpretations of Locke. The disputes are commonly traced back to a disagreement about the question of how many things exist at a particular spatiotemporal location. For instance, consider a cat and the material particles that compose the cat. Do two distinct things—one a cat and the other a collection of material particles—exist at the same spatiotemporal location, as suggested by defenders of coincidence interpretations? Or is there just one thing that can be considered both as a cat and a collection of material particles, as defenders of Relative Identity interpretations propose? Rather than siding with one position, my strategy is to identify problems that arise for both types of interpretations, and to show how my kind-dependent interpretation avoids them. Readers who are not interested in the details of the scholarly debates can skip the chapter and move immediately to chapter 4.

In chapter 4 I apply Locke's kind-dependent account of identity to persons. The chapter begins by focusing on Locke's account of personhood and I argue that persons, according to Locke, belong to a moral and legal kind of being: they are subjects of accountability. I establish this claim by showing with reference to his chapter 'Of Power' (II.xxi) and other writings that his moral and legal conception of a person is present throughout his chapter 'Of Identity and Diversity'. The interpretation I offer gives full credit to Locke's claim that 'person' is a forensic term, but it also shows that Locke's arguments presuppose a particular conception of morality that is grounded in divine law and the power of a superior lawmaker to enforce morality by rewards and punishment. Next, I ask how Locke's moral and legal account of personhood enables us to specify persistence conditions for persons. I shed further light on why it is plausible to regard Lockean persons as subjects of accountability and argue that examining Locke's understanding of the conditions of just accountability provides a clue for answering the question of what makes a person, or subject of accountability, the same over time. I show that for Locke sameness of consciousness is a necessary condition for moral accountability. This makes it possible to establish that sameness of consciousness is a necessary condition for personal identity. Moreover, I emphasize that Locke thinks about moral accountability in a particular and controversial way. Critical responses by his contemporaries William Molyneux and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz illustrate that it is possible to think about moral accountability differently. For instance, it is possible to agree with Locke that persons are subjects of moral accountability, but due to an alternative understanding of moral accountability one can reject Locke's view that personal identity consists in same consciousness. The considerations in this chapter provide resources for a fine-grained understanding of the relation between morality and metaphysics in Locke's account of personal identity. I argue that moral considerations have explanatory priority, but sameness of consciousness is ontologically prior to attributions of moral accountability in particular instances when one intends to decide whether a person is accountable for an action.

By the end of chapter 4, I establish that sameness of consciousness is necessary for personal identity. It remains to ask whether it is also sufficient. This question will be addressed in chapter 6. Before we are in a position to engage with it, it will be important to carefully examine Locke's understanding of sameness of consciousness. This is the task of chapter 5.

Chapter 5 begins by acknowledging a difference between consciousness that is built into individual mental states from a more complex notion of same consciousness, which additionally involves relations among several mental states. With regard to the former, I share the views of other interpreters that for Locke consciousness is not a higher order mental state and cannot be identified with reflection. However, in contrast to Weinberg, I believe that consciousness for Locke is not restricted to self-consciousness, ²² but also includes consciousness of the contents of one's perceptions. In the existing secondary literature on Locke's account of same consciousness we find a variety of different interpretations: For instance, it has been suggested that Locke understands same consciousness in terms of memory, appropriation, duration, or a metaphysical fact. Often these proposals are treated as exclusive rival views. I believe that it is a mistake to treat the proposals as exclusive, but rather many of them offer important insights into Locke's understanding of same consciousness, yet they are incomplete on their own. On the basis of a close reading of Locke's text, I show that revival of past thoughts and actions through memory, mineness, togetherness (or unity), and temporality are all important aspects of his same consciousness account. I conclude that Locke's account of same consciousness is richer than commonly acknowledged and has multiple aspects.

Chapter 6 addresses circularity and insufficiency worries that have been raised against Locke's same consciousness account of personal identity. I begin by distinguishing different versions of circularity worries. Introducing these distinctions enables me to advance the debates in the literature, because the different types of circularity worries require different answers. I then show that Locke has resources to respond to Joseph Butler's circularity objection. However, the more pressing worry concerns the question of whether sameness of consciousness is sufficient for personal identity, which is the so-called insufficiency worry. The insufficiency worry can be presented as a circularity worry, but need not be. I show how Locke's multiple aspects account of same consciousness introduced in chapter 5 provides resources for addressing the insufficiency worry. A response to the insufficiency worry calls for an examination of whether sameness of consciousness is ontologically suitable to ground personal identity. Although the limitations of human

²² See Weinberg, Consciousness in Locke, xi-xiii, 27, 33, 45-7, 51.

understanding prevent us from knowing the exact metaphysical foundation of sameness of consciousness, Locke believes that we should engage in probable reasoning in areas where we lack knowledge. I propose that Locke has resources to accept, on the basis of probable reasoning, that same consciousness that has a metaphysical foundation that most likely has relational structure. I believe that the advantage of this reading is that it brings to light that he not merely criticizes views that assume that persistence requires the continued existence of a substance, but also that he has resources for developing a plausible—though probable—alternative that avoids circularity and insufficiency.

Chapter 7 situates Locke's account of personal identity in the context of metaphysical and religious debates of his day, especially the debates concerning the possibility of the afterlife and the resurrection. I adopt Locke's classifications of the views of his predecessors and examine metaphysical problems for material, Cartesian and non-Cartesian immaterial views of the soul, and views that regard human beings as mind-body unions. I show that Locke is well aware of these problems and argue that the strength of his account of personal identity in terms of sameness of consciousness is that it provides a response to the various problems that arise for the views of his predecessors. Furthermore, the advantage of his theory is that it does not require him to prove the views of his predecessors to be mistaken, and it is thereby consistent with their mutually exclusive views regarding the materiality and immateriality of thinking substances.

In chapter 8 I offer a new look at the problem of transitivity by building on the insight of chapter 7 that it is of great importance for Locke to take seriously the possibility of the afterlife and a last judgement. My contributions are as follows: first, I give credit to Galen Strawson's and Matthew Stuart's non-transitive interpretations,²³ who both emphasize that Locke's account of personal identity fundamentally concerns questions of moral accountability. Based on the insights of their interpretations, I develop a list of constraints that any good interpretation of Locke's view should satisfy. However, there are also shortcomings of Strawson's and Stuart's interpretations, which my own interpretation overcomes. I argue that a genuine question of transitivity arises in the context of the afterlife and a last judgement and that Locke would take the transitivity problem in this context seriously. I develop a hybrid interpretation that takes insights of transitive and non-transitive interpretations seriously and show how it is grounded in Locke's account of sameness of consciousness as introduced in chapter 5, how it can better accommodate the religious context than competing interpretations without neglecting the insights of Strawson's and Stuart's interpretations. Moreover, I show with reference to Locke's writings on religion that my interpretation leaves room for repentance.

²³ See Strawson, Locke on Personal Identity, 53-7, chs. 10-11; Stuart, Locke's Metaphysics, ch. 8, especially 353-9, 378-85.

Chapter 9 brings together the results of the previous chapters and shows what role Locke's moral, religious, metaphysical, and epistemic background beliefs play in his thinking about persons and personal identity.

Instead of ending my study here, I believe it is important to ask why hardly any of Locke's early critics understood him in the way I interpret his view. It is not uncommon that Locke's distinctions between the ideas of person, man, and substance are neglected, or that his critics do not engage with the moral dimension of his view, let alone acknowledge his claim that 'person' is a forensic term. How can it be that considerations that are at the heart of my interpretation find little to no consideration in the views of his critics? I offer a few case studies to show that the disagreement between Locke and his early critics can be traced back to a disagreement about underlying moral, religious, metaphysical, and/or epistemic views. Hence, the initial challenges that arise for my interpretation ultimately strengthen my thesis that Locke's thinking about persons and personal identity is shaped by his underlying background beliefs.

Many of Locke's early critics reject Locke's account of persons and personal identity on metaphysical and/or religious grounds. Chapter 10 focuses on a selection of these objections and thereby reveals metaphysical, religious, and epistemic differences between Locke's view and the views of his early critics and defenders. I pay particular attention to two debates that lead several critics to reject Locke's thinking about persons and personal identity, but also prompt others to defend his view, namely debates whether the soul always thinks and debates whether matter can think. With respect to each debate my aim is to identify factors why Locke's early critics endorse metaphysical and epistemic views that differ from Locke's view and how this leads them to reject Locke's thinking about persons and personal identity.

Chapter 11 focuses on Shaftesbury's and Hume's responses to Locke's account of persons and personal identity. Both philosophers generally share Locke's metaphysically agnostic views, but disagree with Locke on moral and religious grounds. By contrasting Locke's, Shaftesbury's, and Hume's moral and religious views we can see how their different moral and religious views shape their thinking about persons and personal identity and understand why Shaftesbury and Hume develop views about persons and personal identity that differ not only from Locke's view, but also from each other. I pay particular attention to how Shaftesbury and Hume each criticize psychological accounts of personal identity and explain how their underlying moral and religious views help understand the respective criticisms. Moreover, both philosophers reject moral theories grounded in divine law. Since Locke's account of moral personhood can be separated from his psychological account of personal identity, it is interesting to ask how philosophers who do not share Locke's moral views, which are grounded in divine law, approach or can approach moral personhood.

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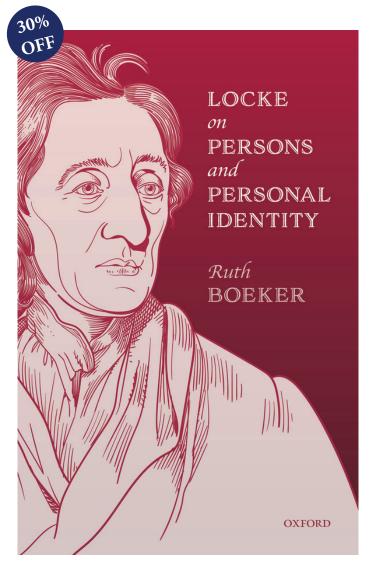
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Locke on Persons and Personal Identity

Ruth Boeker



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Ruth Boeker offers a new perspective on Locke's account of persons and personal identity by considering it within the context of his broader philosophical project and the philosophical debates of his day. In contrast to some neo-Lockean views about personal identity, she argues that Locke's account of personal identity is not psychological per se, but rather his underlying moral, religious, metaphysical, and epistemic background beliefs are relevant for understanding why he argues for a consciousness-based account of personal identity.

FEATURES

- Emphasizes the importance of the moral and religious dimensions of Locke's view
- Shows how Locke links a moral account of personhood with a psychological account of personal identity over time
- Provides detailed analyses of philosophical arguments by Locke and his early critics and defenders

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