

Locke on Substance, Mode, and Personal Identity

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This dissertation is dedicated to my father.

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SUMMARY

In my dissertation I examine how John Locke's conceptions of "substance" and "mode" inform his theory of personal identity. My goal is to get a better understanding of what Locke's picture of persons looks like and where Locke lies within the larger debate over personal identity. I start with the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons.

In Book II, Ch. XXVII of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke famously claims that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for the identity of a person over time. Many commentators have contended that there is a tension between this claim and Locke's definition of "person." They argue that the latter makes it look like persons are substances, but the former makes it look like this can't be the case.

This has caused some commentators to argue that Locke thinks persons are modes. This has caused others to claim that Locke thinks persons are substances, but Locke means something different by "substance" when he gives the persistence conditions for persons than when he deems an entity a substance. Although substance readings of Locke on persons were quite popular for some time, mode readings have gained considerable traction as of late. I argue that we must get a firm grasp on what Locke means by "substance" and "mode" to come to a conclusion on the matter.

After giving a thorough treatment of Locke on substance and mode, I swim against the current tide in the secondary literature and argue that there is compelling evidence that Locke thinks persons are substances. This becomes clear if we examine Locke's definition of "person" in light of what Locke says about substance, power, and agency in other parts of the *Essay*. Moreover, I argue that when we place Locke's claims about sameness of substance in their proper context and see what he means by them, it becomes clear that there is no tension between

Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons. Most importantly, we don't have to attribute to Locke a conception of "substance" he doesn't have in order to get this result.

This is not to say that I think Locke's picture of persons is without problems. It's just that a tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons is not one of them.

I. INTRODUCTION

The history of philosophy is steeped in questions about personal identity. For much of this history, it was thought that those who have souls are persons, and those who don't have souls are not. Moreover, it was thought that what accounts for a person being the same over time is having the same soul. In *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, John Locke (1632–1704) denies that sameness of person rests in sameness of substance—including the soul. When Locke makes this claim, he departs from philosophical tradition and changes the course of the debate over personal identity.

Although many of Locke's peers embraced his claims about persons—like Edmund Law (1703–1787), Anthony Collins (1676–1729) and David Hume (1711–1776),¹ many early modern philosophers vehemently objected to them (Joseph Butler (1692–1752), Thomas Reid (1710–1796), Samuel Clarke (1675–1729), Gottfried Leibniz (1646–1716), etc.). Those who did argued that sameness of substance *is* necessary for the identity of persons over time. The early modern debate over personal identity is thus commonly described as one marked by a clear divide between those who think the identity of substance or soul matters when it comes to the persistence of persons and those who don't—or those who think persons are substances and those who don't (Martin and Barresi, 2000, 2006).

I contend that the early modern debate over personal identity is far more nuanced and intriguing than this simple characterization suggests. Although it's often assumed that what Locke means by “substance” or “soul” and what any other early modern philosopher means by “substance” or “soul” is the same, there was no universal or accepted notion of these terms at

¹ And non soul-based views are popular today.

work in this debate.² For instance, Locke thinks substances are particular subsistent things. Every particular substance's qualities are supported by substratum. Like most, Locke maintains that thought is an attribute of the soul (though Locke is agnostic about substance dualism³). In addition, Locke contends that thinking or consciousness can be transferred from one soul to another. Locke also claims that a person goes wherever her consciousness goes. Thus, according to Locke, a person can persist despite a change in soul, so long as her consciousness continues in another one.

On the other hand, Rene Descartes (1596–1650) rejects the notion of “substratum.” Descartes also claims that each substance has one attribute that constitutes its essence.⁴ Any other property of that substance is a determination of that essence. Additionally, Descartes thinks that although we can distinguish between a substance and its principle attribute, this distinction is merely conceptual.⁵ Any substance and its principle attribute are actually identical (Nolan, 1997). Importantly, Descartes claims that the principle attribute of the soul is thinking or thought.

With this in mind, it's quite clear that Descartes wouldn't be moved by the soul-switching scenarios that Locke describes in his discussion of persons. Descartes wouldn't be convinced that a person could persist despite a change in soul because Descartes couldn't properly conceive of a soul and its principle attribute—thought—actually coming apart. According to Descartes, such a thing is impossible.

² Martin and Barresi don't do much to discuss the different uses of “substance” circulating during the early modern debate over personal identity, and this is especially true in *Naturalization of the Soul*. They do more to discuss different notions of “soul” in *The Rise and Fall of the Soul and Self*, but again don't do much to discuss differences in conceptions of “substance” at work in this debate.

³ When it comes to finite substances.

⁴ See Descartes' *Principles of Philosophy*, 1:53.

⁵ See Descartes' *Principles*.

Thus although both Locke and Descartes employ the terms “substance,” and “soul,” even a cursory treatment of Locke and Descartes like the one I just gave shows that they mean something very different by these terms. Moreover, the discrepancy between Locke and Descartes’ use of “substance” is not anomalous. Such discrepancies permeate the debate between Locke and his peers. One therefore can’t properly understand the early modern debate over personal identity until one understands the different conceptions of “substance” employed in it.

The early modern debate over personal identity is thus not as clear-cut as it at first seems. To make matters worse, it’s difficult to say whether denying that sameness of person rests in sameness of substance amounts to a denial that persons are substances, as most have assumed. Locke claims that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person, but Locke’s definition of “person” looks like it marks an idea of a substance. It thus looks like there is a tension between Locke’s definition of “person” and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons. This means that, as it stands, we can’t say whether Lockean persons are substances or not.⁶

It’s therefore not only difficult to determine what any philosopher means when he asserts or denies that the identity of substance informs the diachronic identity of persons, given the many different conceptions of “substance” circulating throughout the early modern debate. It’s also difficult to determine what Locke means when he claims that sameness of substance is neither required nor enough for the persistence of any person, given that Locke’s definition of “person” makes it look like he thinks persons are substances.

⁶ Martin and Barresi (2000) mention that there is some debate over the ontological status of persons and claim not to take a stance on the matter, but then refer to Lockean persons as either modes or fictional substances thereafter (without arguing for this claim) in *Naturalization of the Soul*. They are more reserved about this in *The Rise and Fall of the Soul and Self*.

The goal of this dissertation is to get clear on how Locke's conceptions of "substance" and "mode" inform his theory of personal identity. More specifically, the goal is to get clear on how Locke conceives of "substance" and "mode" so that we can resolve the apparent tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons. This will give us a more accurate idea of what Locke means when he claims that the identity of substance doesn't determine whether a person persists and a better idea of what Locke's picture of persons looks like. It's only once we have this that we can begin to understand Locke's position within the larger debate.

In what follows I will start by laying out the apparent tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons. I will also say something about the most popular proposed resolutions to this tension: what I call the "Mode Approach" and the "Substance Approach." In this chapter (Chapter 2) it will become clear that a fundamental aspect of Locke's view is up for grabs: the ontological status of persons.

In Chapter 3 I will provide a thorough treatment of Locke on substance and mode so that we can determine whether there is evidence persons fall into one of these ontological categories rather than the other. In Chapter 4 I will argue that although those who give mode readings of Locke on persons give us good reason to consider whether Lockean persons are modes, there is compelling evidence that Lockean persons are substances. This becomes clear when we examine Locke's definition of "person" in light of what he says about substance, power and agency.

I shall also argue that no satisfactory substance reading has been given in the secondary literature, however. The most influential substance reading doesn't cohere with what Locke says about substance elsewhere. Moreover, a careful examination of this interpretation and the text shows that it doesn't cohere with what Locke says in the "Identity and Diversity" chapter either.

In the last chapter of the dissertation I will work to remedy this problem and give my own substance reading of Locke on persons. Building on the results of Chapters 3 and 4, I argue that although Locke claims sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person, Locke can maintain that persons are substances without being caught in the middle of a disturbing contradiction—and we need not attribute to Locke a conception of “substance” there is no evidence he has in order to get this result.

Before we get started I should say a few things about the text and my approach to it. Locke’s main goal in the *Essay* is to get clear on what we can and cannot know. It thus shouldn’t be a surprise that the majority of the claims Locke makes in the *Essay* are epistemological. That being said, Locke does make a good number of metaphysical or ontological claims in the *Essay* as well. It is important to keep both in mind if we aim to get an accurate picture of Locke’s view. I don’t contend that Locke has as fully developed of an ontological picture as many commentators assume, however. And I take it that this is consistent with Locke’s epistemological commitments.

The other thing to note is that while some commentators read each chapter of Locke’s *Essay* as independent from the rest of the text, and Locke’s other writings, this is not the approach I take. I don’t think such an approach gives us an accurate understanding of Locke’s commitments or the sympathetic reading we’re looking for. This is because we have evidence that Locke revised a number of different chapters of the *Essay* simultaneously. In addition, Locke makes some of these changes in light of his correspondence with Stillingfleet. Lastly, Locke himself claims that some sections of the text are better understood in the context of

others.⁷ I thus consider what Locke says about substance, mode and personal identity throughout the *Essay* and his correspondence with Stillingfleet as I work to make sense of Locke's discussion of persons and their persistence conditions here.⁸

Finally, I should note that I don't think that everything Locke says is clear. Nor do I think that what Locke says is always consistent. I do think that Locke was an incredibly astute philosopher, however, and we should do our best to save him from unsavory consequences when possible. As a sympathetic commentator I have worked to read Locke as maintaining a consistent position in his theory of personal identity but I have also worked to ensure that my interpretation does not exceed his own commitments. I hope that this is apparent in what follows.

⁷ For example, in Book II, Ch. XXIX, Locke claims that what he says there will hopefully become clearer within the context of what he says in a later discussion. Here Locke says: "This, perhaps, will be fuller understood, after what I say of Words, in the Third Book, has been read and considered" (Book II, Ch. XXIX, §10). This and all other references to the *Essay* are references to the Nidditch edition of the *Essay*, Oxford: 1975 (which is the preferred edition amongst Locke scholars).

⁸ The way I approach the text follows in the footsteps of Jolley (2006) and McCann, etc.

II. AN APPARENT TENSION IN LOCKE'S TEXT

A. Introduction

Locke added the “Identity and Diversity” chapter to the second edition (1694) of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* after William Molyneux urged him to do so. In this chapter Locke discusses the diachronic identity of a number of different kinds of things, but the most notable remarks Locke makes pertain to persons and their persistence conditions. It's here that Locke claims sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person.

This claim has received a great deal of sustained attention. This is for a number of reasons. To start, it's controversial. Substance was long considered the thing which allowed an entity to persist over time, despite the many changes it might undergo. Thus, when Locke departed from this metaphysical or ontological commitment, he left the reader to wonder how, in any real sense, persons maintain identity over time.

This claim is also both important and puzzling. It's important because one must understand what Locke means by it to understand Locke's picture of persons. It's puzzling because it appears to be in tension with how Locke defines “person.” This apparent tension was highlighted soon after the second edition of the *Essay* was published, and it is the subject of intense debate in the secondary literature today.⁹

In what follows I will work to draw out the apparent tension between Locke's definition of “person” and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons. I will then give a brief sketch of the different interpretive approaches sympathetic commentators have employed in an effort to

⁹ It's both the case that this is a long-discussed tension and the case that there is a raging debate over the ontological status of Lockean persons. As we will see, there is a debate about the latter, due to the former (though some commentators treat the latter without discussing the former).

resolve it.¹⁰ In the end I will argue that in order to determine whether either what I call the “Mode Approach” or the “Substance Approach” work, we must know more about Locke on substance and mode.

B. The Apparent Tension

In Book II, Ch. XXVII, Locke claims that “*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” (§9). As many commentators note, it looks like the name “person” stands for an idea of a substance. Most point to Locke’s definition of “substance” in Book II, Ch. XII, and Locke’s use of the terms “thing” and “being” in the definition of “person” to illustrate why it looks like this is the case.

In Book II, Ch. XII, §6, Locke claims that the name “substance” stands for complex ideas, which “are such combinations of simple *Ideas*, as are taken to represent distinct particular things subsisting by themselves.” In other words, ideas of substances represent particular subsistent things. When Locke says the idea we call “person” represents a thinking intelligent *being*, which can consider itself as the same thinking *thing* in different times and places, it thus seems like this is exactly what Locke is saying the idea we call “person” amounts to.¹¹ It looks like Locke thinks our idea of “person” is an idea of a substance. Put more plainly, it looks like Locke thinks persons are substances.

¹⁰ I restrict my attention to what I call the “Mode Approach” and what I call the “Substance Approach,” though it should be noted that there are commentators who use what I call the “Relative Identity Approach” too. I discuss the Relative Identity Approach briefly in a footnote below, but spend most of my time discussing the Mode and Substance Approaches because I don’t think there is any evidence for the Relative Identity Approach. I thus follow Chappell and Yaffe on this, and ask readers to turn to Chappell and Yaffe (2007, pp. 199–200) for a more comprehensive argument against the Relative Identity Approach, though I do offer some of my thoughts on this and a glimpse of what they say below.

¹¹ Especially because “being” is just another word for a thing that exists.

After Locke defines “person,” as just described, he turns his attention to the problem of personal identity. He explores what makes any person the same person over time. Here Locke claims that it is not sameness of substance, but sameness of consciousness that does the job: “For it being the same consciousness that makes a Man be himself to himself, *personal Identity* depends on that only, whether it be annexed only to one individual Substance, or can be continued in a succession of several Substances” (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §10, 18–21). What this and other similar claims¹² amount to, is that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person.¹³

In the *Analogy of Religion, Natural and Revealed* (1736), Joseph Butler suggests that this creates a tension in Locke’s view. He says,

The thing here considered, and demonstratively, as I think, determined, is proposed by Mr. Locke in these words, *Whether it*, i.e., the same self or person, *be the same identical substance?* And he has suggested what is a much better answer to the question, than that which he gives it in form. For he defines Person, *a thinking intelligent being, &c.*, and personal identity, *the sameness of a rational Being*. The question then is, whether the same rational being is the same substance: which needs no answer, because Being and Substance, in this place, stand for the same idea” (Butler, 1736, p. 330).

It’s clear from the passage just quoted that Butler thinks persons are substances. It’s also clear that Butler takes Locke to agree.¹⁴ Butler thus expects sameness of substance to be required

¹² “Nothing but consciousness can unite remote Existences into the same Person, the Identity of Substance will not do it” (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §23).

¹³ Other commentators take the text I just included to amount to the same thing: “In the famous chapter on identity in the *Essay* (II. xxvii), Locke notoriously denies that sameness of substance is either necessary or sufficient for sameness of person.” (Alston and Bennett, 1988, p. 25). “When Locke goes on to discuss personal identity, he insists that it neither requires nor is entailed by identity of ... substance” (Noonan, 1978, p. 345).

¹⁴ Based upon the way in which Locke defines “person.”

for any person's persistence. When Locke denies this, Butler thinks Locke ends up with a position that is not only wrong, but also inconsistent.¹⁵

Edmund Law picks up on this tension in 1769, but Reid does so shortly thereafter, and more explicitly. We will thus turn our attention to Reid now. In the *Essays on the Intellectual Powers of Man* (1785), Reid claims:

He observes very justly, that to know what is meant by the same person, we must consider what the word *person* stands for; and he defines a person to be an intelligent being, endowed with reason and with consciousness, which last he thinks inseparable from thought. From this definition of a person, it must necessarily follow, that while the intelligent being continues to exist and to be intelligent, it must be the same person. To say that the intelligent being is the person, and yet that the person ceases to exist, while the intelligent being continues, or that the person continues while the intelligent being ceases to exist, is, to my apprehension, a manifest contradiction. One would think that the definition of a person should perfectly ascertain the nature of personal identity, or wherein it consists, though it might still be a question how we come to know and be assured of our personal identity. Mr. Locke tells us, however, 'that personal identity, that is the sameness of a rational being, consists in consciousness alone; and, as far as this consciousness can be extended backward to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person. (Reid, 356–357)

Reid's observations are much like Butler's. Here it's clear Reid thinks that given the way Locke defines "person," sameness of person should consist in sameness of being, or substance. When Locke claims that it is sameness of consciousness and not sameness of substance that makes any person the same over time, he ends up with a tension in his text as a result.

Many commentators today come to the same conclusion:¹⁶ Given that Locke's definition of "person" makes it seem like he's committed to persons being substances, and Locke's claims about the persistence conditions of persons amount to sameness of substance being neither

¹⁵ Much of this is implied when Butler (1736) says, "[H]e has suggested what is a much better answer to the question, than that which he gives it in form" (p. 330, and the context of the passage quoted here).

¹⁶ In *Self-Knowledge and Self-Identity* (1963), Shoemaker revives discussion of this tension and claims that if Locke's definition amounts to persons being substances, as it looks like it does, Reid (1969) is right: Locke has a problem. Alston and Bennett (1988) come to the same conclusion, and William Uzgalis (1990) does too.

necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person, it appears that the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons are inconsistent with Locke's definition of "person." It looks like we first get Locke claiming that persons are substances, and then get Locke denying that this is the case, for it appears that Locke is simultaneously committed to the claim that persons are substances and the claim that an entity can persist as the same person despite not being the same substance over time.¹⁷ We are thus left to wonder: Does Locke think persons are substances, or not? Or as Alston and Bennett put it: "What is going on?" (Alston and Bennett, 26).

C. The Mode and Substance Approaches

Responses to this tension have varied. As we should expect, some commentators have just been happy to find Locke in the middle of what looks like a contradiction and leave it at that. Others are more sympathetic and have worked to resolve this tension in Locke's text. Some contend that Locke's definition of "person" need not be read as marking an idea of a substance. They argue that persons are modes instead. Others claim that Locke's definition of "person" does mark an idea of a substance, but argue that Locke means something different by "substance" when he gives the persistence conditions for persons than when he deems an entity a substance. I call the former the "Mode Approach" and the latter the "Substance Approach."¹⁸

¹⁷ "In thus denying that the identity of a person is determined by 'unity of substance,' Locke denies that a person is a substance. If people were substances of some kind, then for me to be the same person through a stretch of time would just be for me to continue to be the same substance of that sort" (Alston and Bennett, 1988, p. 25).

¹⁸ As I mentioned above, some, who aren't happy to find Locke in what looks like the middle of a contradiction, resolve this apparent tension by claiming that Locke is a strong relative identity theorist. I call this approach the "Relative Identity Approach." According to Noonan and others who favor the Relative Identity Approach (Geach, Odegard, Griffin, Mackie, Langtry and Matthew Stuart), Locke can be read as claiming not only that identity is relative to sorts, but also that something that is of two sorts can persist as one sort, while no longer remaining the same relative to the other sort. Moreover, this is the case even if every thing of the one sort is also of the other sort. In other words, if x is an F and also a G, y can be the same F as x, without being the same G as x, even though all Fs are Gs (though Stuart's view seems to be slightly different from this—and I come to this conclusion after

Supporters of the Mode Approach and Substance Approach both think they resolve the apparent tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons but Locke's picture of persons ends up looking very different under these different interpretive strategies. In what follows I will say more about the Mode Approach and then turn our attention to the details of the most cited Substance Approach.

Those who utilize the Mode Approach tailor or alter Locke's definition of "person" to match the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons. Those who follow this approach argue that Lockean persons are modes (rather than substances), and contend that Locke's claim that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person is consistent

hearing him give a paper at the Margaret Wilson Conference at Dartmouth College (June 2012). Under this reading, if *x* is a person and a substance, *y* can be the same person as *x*, without being the same substance as *x*. And, this is the case even if all persons are substances. Noonan, and others who utilize the Relative Identity Approach think that this is how we ought to take Locke, not only because taking Locke in this way resolves the apparent tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons, but also because there is no evidence against it. I contend, however, that because holding such a view on identity is rather provocative, and far from common, it is the onus of Noonan and others who utilize the Relative Identity Approach to give evidence that Locke actually holds this kind of view, rather than a less extreme version of it. The oaks and horses passage (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §23–29) is the only passage supporters of the Relative Identity Approach can offer as evidence for their interpretation. Here Locke claims, "An Oak, growing from a Plant to a great Tree, and then lopp'd is still the same Oak: And a Colt grown up to a Horse, sometimes fat, sometimes lean, is all the while the same Horse: though, in both Cases, there may be a manifest change of the parts: So that truly they are not either of them the same Masses of Matter, though they be truly one of them the same Oak, and the other the same Horse" (§3, 23–29). As Chappell and Yaffe rightly argue, this passage fails to actually provide said evidence. From this passage, it looks like Locke is saying that *x* can persist as the same animal (*F*) but not as the same mass of matter (*G*). What we don't get out of this passage is that this is the case when all *F*s are *G*s, however. This is because for all *F*s to be *G*s, it has to be the case every entity that is of the kind or sort *F* is also identical to a member of the kind or sort *G*. Thus, we would only get evidence for the stronger relative identity claim if every animal is identical to a mass of matter, and, as it turns out, not one animal is identical to a mass of matter, under Locke's view. Rather, "an animal is a living organized body," according to Locke (II. xxvii, 8). (And organized living bodies and bodies are not identical for Locke.) Thus, even if an *x* can persist as an *F* (animal) but not as the same *G* (mass of matter), we don't have evidence that Locke thinks an *x* can persist as the same *F*, but not as the same *G*, even though all *F*s are *G*s, and we don't have evidence the Relative Identity Approach supporters need as a result. For an in depth discussion of this please see Chappell and Yaffe, but suffice it to say that I don't see the Relative Identity Approach as a viable interpretive resolution to the apparent tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons. I thus restrict my attention to the Mode and Substance Approaches here.

with Locke's definition of "person" as a result. The first to employ the Mode Approach was Edmund Law, in 1769.

Law¹⁹ thinks we ought to resolve the tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons by reading Locke as having been careless with his definition of "person." If we do this, we can alter Locke's definition of "person" to match the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons. In other words, if we think that Locke meant to claim that persons are modes of thinking intelligent beings things, rather than thinking intelligent beings in themselves (or substances), and re-phrase the definition of "person" accordingly, we can make it consistent with the assertion that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person. Specifically, Law says,

In the aforementioned section Mr. Locke says, that person stands for 'a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection,' &c. whereas I should imagine the expression would have been more just, had he said that the word person stands for an attribute, or quality, or character of a thinking intelligent being ... [I]n this sense Locke has incautiously defined the word. The word person then ... stand[s] for a certain guise, character, quality, *i.e.*, being in fact a mixed mode, or a relation, and not a substance. (Law, 199–200)

The idea behind this approach seems to be that because Locke often talks loosely, we have more freedom to interpret what Locke might mean when he defines a word, than we might have otherwise. We can thus take the wordage Locke uses in his definition of "person" less seriously and use the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons to read back into Locke's definition of "person," and establish persons' ontological status as a result.

¹⁹ Edmund Law was a supporter of Locke and wrote "A Defence of Mr. Locke's Opinion Concerning Personal Identity" in 1769. The "Defence" was first published on its own, but was later included as an Appendix to Locke's *Works* (1777, 1794, 1801, 1823) (Winkler, 1991, fn 15).

For instance, we might think that when Locke calls persons “thinking things”²⁰ he is being a bit careless, like those of us who call a triangle a “three-sided thing.” If taken literally, and we define “substance,” as Locke does, it would look like we take triangles to be substances. Perhaps our intention was to claim that triangles are modes of substances, however,²¹ and we just used the word “thing” for lack of a better word.

Moreover, perhaps that’s precisely what Locke is doing with regard to persons. When Locke defines “person” in the way he does, and then claims that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person, he highlights the inaccuracy of his definition. We can thus re-interpret Locke as claiming that persons are modes of substances, rather than substances in themselves. Moreover, this is what Law thinks sympathetic readers ought to do.

According to Law and other supporters of the Mode Approach, we should think that Lockean persons are modes and that nothing Locke says in section 10 or 23 of Book II, Ch. XXVII, conflicts with Locke’s definition of “person” as a result. This might sound like a pretty promising start, but we must also consider how supporters of the Substance Approach work to resolve the apparent tension between Locke’s definition of “person” and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons.

Unlike those who utilize the Mode Approach, supporters of the Substance Approach²² take Locke’s definition of “person” seriously and go from there. Given the fact that Locke

²⁰ The same move can be made with “thinking intelligent being,” as we can just take “being” to mean “thing that exists.”

²¹ As Locke does.

²² In addition to Alston and Bennett, there are many others who think Lockean persons are substances, including Atherton, Winkler, Bolton, Conn, Chappell, and most recently, Rickless (draft). I chose Alston and Bennett because their interpretation is most complete, or representative of what I’m calling the Substance Approach, and because theirs is an interpretation that’s most cited. (It’s worth noting that it now seems (as of June 2012) that Bolton is not so committed but her new view is not yet in print. Also: some commentators are committed to the claim that Lockean persons are substances but don’t deal with the apparent tension at the center of our inquiry here.)

describes persons as “things,” and Locke’s definition of “substance” in Book II, Ch. XII amounts to an idea of a particular subsistent thing, those who take the Substance Approach begin with the assertion that Lockean persons are substances. It thus at first looks like what those who use the Substance Approach do is re-establish that there is a tension between Locke’s definition of “person” and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons.

In effect what’s going on is that those who take the Substance Approach see as their task making the ontological status of Lockean persons—as substances—consistent with the claim that sameness of substance is neither required nor enough for any person to persist. In order to complete this task, supporters of the Substance Approach suggest we read Locke as using the term “substance” in a different way when he claims that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person, than when he deems an entity (like an oak or man) a “substance.”

The most cited version of the Substance Approach is that offered by Alston and Bennett (1988). According to Alston and Bennett, we should read Locke as using “substance” in an idiosyncratic way when he claims sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person. More specifically, Alston and Bennett contend that we ought to take Locke to mean “thing-like item that is quantified over at a basic level of one’s ontology” when he uses the word “substance” in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter (Alston and Bennett, 38). This is because Alston and Bennett think this reading of “substance” best aligns with Locke’s discussion of the identity of other entities, including plants and animals; and we must read Locke as using the same sense of “substance” throughout the “Identity” chapter for this area of the text to have an acceptable degree of unity. Moreover, this reading of Locke makes the best sense of many difficult passages in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter.

According to Alston and Bennett, Lockean persons are substances, but there is no tension between this and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons. This is because when Locke claims that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person, he uses the term “substance” in this special or basic way. In other words, persons are things (“substances” in the usual sense), but such things don’t depend for their persistence on the most basic things there are (“substances” in the idiosyncratic sense).

According to Alston and Bennett, we can think Lockean persons are substances, and save Locke from being caught in the middle of a contradiction, so long as we think Locke uses a special sense of “substance” in his discussion of identity. Moreover, we need not ignore Locke’s definition of “person” in order to get this result.

Alston and Bennett’s Substance Approach was considered the preferred reading of Locke on persons for quite a while. Recently, however, Edmund Law’s interpretive strategy has been resurrected (Mattern, 1980; LoLordo, 2010; Strawson, 2011; Thiel, 2011). Uzgalis (1990) also offers a mode reading of Locke on persons. Mode readings of Locke on persons have thus gained traction as of late. Like those who offer Mode and Substance Approaches, I contend that we ought not read Locke as being inconsistent and leave it at that. I think we ought to work to give Locke the most sympathetic reading we can. Determining whether either the Mode Approach or Substance Approach provides the sympathetic interpretation of Locke that we’re looking for is no easy task, however.

So far our understanding of Locke on substance and mode has been limited to Locke’s initial definition of “substance” and Law’s reading of what Locke means by “mode.” Law asserts that modes are identical to qualities of substances.²³ This may match Locke’s meaning when he

²³ He also seems to suggest that such entities are synonymous with relations.

claims modes are “Dependences on, or Affections of Substances” in his initial definition of “mode” (Book II, Ch. XII, §4), but the accuracy of this is difficult to tell based upon Book II, Ch. XII alone. Locke suggests that he has an unusual understanding of modes, and this is something we should keep in mind. After defining “mode” in Book II, Ch. XII, Locke claims:

And if in this I use the word mode in somewhat a different sense from its ordinary signification, I beg pardon; it being unavoidable in discourses, differing from the ordinary received notions, either to make new words, or to use old words in somewhat a new signification; the latter whereof, in our present case, is perhaps the more tolerable of the two” (Book II, Ch. XII, §4).

It will thus take a bit of work to understand what Locke means by “mode” and how Locke’s conception of mode compares with a more traditional understanding of the ontological category.

The task doesn’t look much easier when it comes substance. So far we have noted that Locke calls substances “particular subsistent things” but we haven’t said much about what this means, or what the dependence relationship between substances and modes amounts to. It’s also worth noting that if we take a look at Locke’s initial definition of “substance” in more detail, it becomes clear that there is a degree to which each of our ideas of substances is (at least in part) confused. He says, “The *Ideas of Substances* are such combinations of simple *Ideas*, as are taken to represent distinct particular things, subsisting by themselves; in which the supposed, or confused *Idea* of Substance, such as it is, is always the first and chief” (Book II, Ch. XII, §6). It’s not clear why this is the case or what this means, however.

The problem is that Locke makes claims about substances, modes and persons throughout the *Essay*. Sometimes he does so in the most unexpected spots.²⁴ He also discusses substances, modes and persons in his lengthy correspondence with Stillingfleet, and even edits sections of

²⁴ We shouldn’t be surprised that this is the case, as Locke’s *Essay* is an “essay” in the true sense of the word. The 700+ page work before us is the outcome of over 20 years of interrupted work. Locke warns us that this is a project which he attended to in spurts, and one in which there is some disorganization and much repetition.

the *Essay* in light of what transpires in this correspondence. Given this, it's only after a close examination of the *Essay* as a whole and Locke's correspondence with Stillingfleet that we can get an accurate picture of Locke on substance and mode and begin to clarify the ambiguities in his initial definitions of each. Moreover, it's only after we get a better understanding of the distinction Locke makes between substance and mode that we can evaluate whether either the Mode or Substance Approach work as a viable resolution to the apparent tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons. We thus ought not base our picture of Locke on substances, modes and persons upon what Locke says in Book II, Ch. XII and Book II, Ch. XXVII alone.²⁵

D. Conclusion

The apparent tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons is well documented. So are the sympathetic responses some commentators have offered in response to it. Determining whether these responses are as sympathetic as they purport to be takes knowing more about Locke on substance and mode, however. We can't come to any conclusions about Locke on substance and mode, or where persons lie with regard to this ontological divide, based upon what Locke says in his initial definitions of "substance" and "mode" (Book II, Ch. XII).

In the next chapter I thus offer a more thorough account of Locke on substance, mode, and our ideas of each. The expectation is that this will better prepare us to understand Locke's claims about persons and determine whether either the Mode or Substance Approaches resolve the apparent tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons in a way that is satisfying.

²⁵ Though this is what so many commentators do.

III. LOCKE ON SUBSTANCE, MODE, AND OUR IDEAS OF EACH

A. Introduction

We must get a firm grasp on what Locke means by “substance” and “mode” to determine whether either the Substance or Mode Approach will work to resolve the apparent tension between Locke’s definition of “person” and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Locke’s claims about substance and mode can be found throughout the *Essay* and in his correspondence with Stillingfleet. In what follows I will consider what Locke has to say about substance and mode in both of these sources. I will also say a bit about some of the ongoing debates in the secondary literature, though I will restrict my attention to those that are necessary to resolving the apparent tension at hand. In the end we will get a more complete picture of Locke on substance and mode than we had in the last chapter. This will put us in a better position to evaluate the Substance and Mode Approaches, though a good number of questions will remain.

B. Background

To begin to understand what Locke has in mind when he defines “substance” and “mode,” it would do us well to take a step back and consider how Locke thinks we come to have any ideas at all. According to Locke, the source of each and every one of our ideas is experience.²⁶ The two kinds of experience we have are called “sensation” and “reflection.” Our experience is categorized as “sensation” when our attention is directed outside of ourselves. Our experience is categorized as “reflection” when our attention is directed inward (Book II, Ch. I,

²⁶ I won’t cover Locke’s arguments against innate ideas here, as that would take too much time. I will thus assume Locke’s anti-nativist stance and proceed from there. For Locke’s arguments against innate ideas, see Book I of the *Essay*.

§2). It's thus from sensation that we get the ideas we call "yellow," "hard," and "cold," etc. It's from reflection that we get the ideas we call "thinking," "knowing," and "judgment," etc.²⁷

Some of the ideas we get from experience are those that Locke calls "simple." Others are those that Locke calls "complex." Simple ideas are ideas that we get immediately from sensory or reflective experience (or a combination of the two). They contain no parts (Book III, Ch. IV)²⁸ and are ideas that we do no work to create (Book II, Ch. II, § 1).²⁹ Complex ideas, on the other hand, are ideas we get as a result of the understanding's work³⁰ on the simple ideas we get through experience.³¹ The former are singular and are ideas we can't help but have. The latter are conglomerates that we create once furnished with the former (Book II, Ch. II, §2).³²

Whether simple or complex, our ideas are clear or obscure; distinct or confused; real or fantastical; and adequate or inadequate.³³ Locke claims an idea is clear if it is vivid or exact, and we can easily reignite it via the memory. It is obscure if not. (Book II, Ch. XXIX, §2). An idea is distinct if it can be distinguished from other similar ideas, and confused if not (Book II, Ch. XXIX, §4). An idea is real if it represents the archetype it intends to, and fantastical if not (Book

²⁷ When Locke calls an experience "reflection," he isn't describing what people mean to capture when they say that they "reflected on the week's events," or something similar. Locke means something very specific by "reflection." When we reflect, the object of our attention is the *operations* of our own minds (Book II, Ch. I). It seems that what we're doing when we reflect is getting a handle on what our minds are doing/the state our minds are in. I suggest we hold Locke to this rather technical notion of "reflection" as we proceed.

²⁸ Though there is some debate about this as Locke claims that the idea we have of duration contains parts, though it is simple. This won't end up mattering much for our purposes here, however.

²⁹ Examples include the ideas we call "yellow" and "unity."

³⁰ This work includes comparing, combining, compounding, etc.

³¹ Examples include the ideas we call "man" and "justice."

³² It's important to remember that the scope of our complex ideas is limited to our simple ideas. This means no complex idea can contain as a component part something that is not a simple idea gotten via sensory or reflective experience (or a combination of the two).

³³ Plus true or false.

II, Ch. XXX, §1). Finally, it's only if a real idea represents its archetype perfectly that it's adequate. It is inadequate if not (Book II, Ch. XXXI, §1).³⁴

While what we experience in the world is always particular, the vast majority of the ideas we make and name are general (Book III, Ch. I, §5; Book III, Ch. III). This is because it's only if we can make general propositions that we can expand our knowledge.³⁵ We move from ideas of particulars to ideas that are more general via abstraction. What we create as a result is what Locke calls a "nominal essence" and this marks a sort or kind. I will say more about this in what follows but at this point I think we should turn our attention to what Locke has to say about substance, mode, and our ideas of each.

C. Substance and Mode: Ideas

Although many of the details of Locke's distinction between substance and mode are difficult to pin down, there is one thing that is quite clear: our ideas of substances and modes are complex.³⁶ There is thus some sort of process that we engage in when we move from the simple ideas we get directly from experience to the ideas of substance and mode.

When we take any simple idea and multiply³⁷ or manipulate it, the complex idea that results is what Locke calls a "simple mode."³⁸ For instance we can take the idea we have of unity³⁹ and multiply it to get the idea we call "dozen." Or we might take the idea we have of

³⁴ In addition we should note that while no idea itself can, strictly speaking, be true or false, when we make accurate judgments about ideas (and what they represent) Locke thinks we have said something true, and when we make inaccurate judgments about ideas (and what they represent) Locke thinks we have said something false (Book II, Ch. XXXII).

³⁵ And we need to have general ideas to do so.

³⁶ So too are our ideas of relations.

³⁷ or combine it with an idea of the same kind (which I think amounts to the same thing)

³⁸ Despite the fact that these modes are called "simple," they are still complex ideas. Locke just calls them simple to distinguish them from what he calls "mixed modes"—which I will treat next.

³⁹ Unity is a simple idea for Locke.

duration⁴⁰ and manipulate it to get the ideas we call “hour” and “day.” Locke gives numerous examples of simple modes in Book II, Ch. XIII-XXI. It would take us too far afield to explore them in detail here. There are several things that should be noted about simple modes in general, however.

To start it’s important to note that all simple modes contain more than one idea, though each simple idea in any simple mode is of the same kind. It should also be noted that when Locke describes how we make the simple mode “dozen,” he doesn’t claim that we do, or must, observe twelve things in the world before we create this complex idea.⁴¹ Rather we have the idea of a unit and work to get the simple mode we call “dozen” by multiplying or manipulating it. This is done without regard for what we observe in the world, and the same goes for other simple modes. We thus have a lot of freedom when we make simple modes, and our simple modes can take us beyond our direct experience. This is why we can create the simple modes we call “infinity” and “eternity,” for example.⁴²

We should note, however, that while we can have the idea of infinity without experiencing the infinite, we must have the idea we call “unity” to get there. We should also note that while we have the freedom to make the simple modes we desire, we don’t create said ideas without reason. We make and name ideas of simple modes as is helpful. For instance, Locke claims that if we didn’t manipulate the simple ideas we have of duration and space, we would be lost:

From such points fixed in sensible Beings we reckon, and from them we measure out Portions of those infinite Quantities; which so considered, are that which we call *Time* and *Place*. For Duration and Space being in themselves uniform and boundless, the Order

⁴⁰ Duration is a simple idea as well.

⁴¹ Nor does he claim that our goal is to represent twelve things in the world when we do so.

⁴² As we will see in the next chapter, Locke thinks we can make the ideas we call “infinity” and “eternity” though they fail to be clear (Book II, Ch. XXIX, §15 and 16).

and Position of things, without such known settled Points, would be lost in them; and all things would lie jumbled in an incurable Confusion” (Book II, Ch. XV, §5).

Part of the reason we make simple modes, then, is to help us better navigate the world. We also make and name simple modes to communicate with others and expand our knowledge base.

What simple modes we make is thus shaped by our concerns. What simple modes we make is also shaped by the community of language users within which we reside.⁴³ As we will see, Locke makes similar claims about mixed modes.

When we make what Locke calls “mixed modes” we take whatever simple ideas we have, or have had, and combine them as we see fit.⁴⁴ It’s through this process that we arrive at the idea we call “beauty” for example. According to Locke, “beauty” consists in “a certain composition of Colour and Figure, causing delight in the Beholder” (Book II, Ch. XII §5).

It’s often difficult to elucidate the simple ideas that comprise our ideas of mixed modes.⁴⁵ Locke acknowledges this. What becomes clear in Locke’s analysis of “beauty,” however, is that the simple ideas that comprise this complex idea are of different kinds.⁴⁶ The same goes for every other mixed mode, including “gratitude,” “murder,” and “justice” etc. I won’t give a comprehensive account of all of the mixed modes Locke mentions here, but I will say a bit more about mixed modes in general in what follows.

To start it’s important to note that while one could come to have the idea we call “beauty” after observing something beautiful in the world, Locke claims we make the majority

⁴³ Compare the US and metric systems, for instance.

⁴⁴ At this point it’s probably important to note that memory is the power we have to reignite ideas we have had in the past. Memory is not a storehouse for Locke.

⁴⁵ This is especially difficult when we come to have a mixed mode by first learning the name that signifies it from a fellow language user.

⁴⁶ The idea we have of color is a different kind of idea than the idea we have of figure, for example.

of our mixed modes by combining whatever simple ideas we want, without regard for whether there is such a combination in nature. Of this he says:

That the Mind, in respect of its simple *Ideas*, is wholly passive, and receives them all from the Existence and Operations of things, such as Sensation and Reflection offers them, without being able to make any one *Idea*, Experience shows us. But if we attentively consider these *Ideas* I call *mixed Modes*, we are now speaking of, we shall find their Original quite different. *The Mind* often *exercises an active Power in the making these several Combinations*. For it being once furnished with simple *Ideas*, it can put them together in several Compositions, and so make variety of complex *Ideas*, without examining whether they exist so together in Nature. And hence, I think, it is, that these *Ideas* are called *Notions*: as if they had their Original and constant Existence, more in the thoughts of Men, than in the reality of things; and to form such *Ideas*, it sufficed, that the Mind put the parts of them together, and that they were consistent in the Understanding, without considering whether they had any real Being (Book II, Ch. XXII, §2; see also Book II, Ch. XXII, §9).

That being said, we don't make these complex ideas haphazardly. Our goal in making any mixed mode is the same as our goal in making any simple mode: we create said ideas as is helpful (Book II, Ch. XXII, §5). This is why communities change what's included in their inventory of mixed modes over time (Book II, Ch. XXII, §7). This is also why there are mixed modes in some cultures that have no corresponding ideas in others.⁴⁷

What we can say thus far, then, is that whenever we make ideas of modes we take the simple ideas we get via experience and multiply or combine them. When we do so with just one kind of idea, the complex idea we create is called a "simple mode." When we do so with different kinds of simple ideas we create a mixed mode (Book II, Ch. XXII, §1). Whether simple or mixed, it is up to us to multiply or combine the scattered simple ideas we get through sensory and reflective experience, and we do so as we wish.

⁴⁷ Take for example the idea we call "simony." Simony is the act of buying one's way into the papacy through bribery, etc. I doubt that in cultures without Catholicism, there is such a mixed mode (see also Book II, Ch. XXII, §6 and Book III, Ch. V, §8).

Our ideas of modes are thus not copies of beings or what Locke calls “patterns” in nature (Book II, Ch. XXXII, §17; Book III, Ch. IX, §7; Book III, Ch. VI, §9). Rather they are originals, and Locke says as much:

Complex Ideas of Modes ... are Originals ... not Copies, nor made after the pattern of any real existence, to which the Mind intends them to be conformable, and exactly to answer. These being such collections of simple *Ideas* that the Mind it self puts together, and such Collections, that each of them contains in it precisely all that the Mind intends that it should. (Book II, Ch. XXI, §14)

This means that unless we make an inconsistent idea, our ideas of modes are always going to be real. In other words, since there is no thing that we try to copy when we make any mode, there is no way in which our idea can fail to represent it. This also means that each of our modes is going to be adequate. This is because since our ideas of modes don’t intend to represent any archetypes, there is no sense in which they can do fail to do so perfectly:

Our *complex Ideas of Modes*, being voluntary collections of simple *Ideas*, which the Mind puts together, without reference to any real Archetypes, or standing Patterns, existing anywhere, *are*, and cannot but be *adequate Ideas*. Because they not being intended for Copies of Things really existing, but for Archetypes made by the Mind, to rank and denominate Things by, cannot want any thing; they having each of them that combination of *Ideas* and thereby that perfection which the Mind intended they should (Book II, CH. XXXI, §3).⁴⁸

Finally this means that when we want to determine whether our idea of a mixed mode is right we turn not to the world, but other language users to find out:

Nor does the Mind, in these of mixed Modes, as in the complex *Ideas* of Substances, examine them by the real Existence of Things; or verifie them by Patterns, containing such peculiar Compositions in Nature. To know whether his *Idea* of *Adultery*, or *Incest*, be right, will a Man seek it any where amongst Things existing? ... No (Book III, Ch. V, §3; see also Book III, Ch. IX, §7 and Book III, Ch. VI, §44–45).

⁴⁸ Locke claims, “The ideas, therefore, of modes ... cannot but be adequate” (Book II, Ch. XXI, §14). Locke later asserts, however, that our ideas of modes can fail to be adequate is if we take another man’s idea as the archetype for our own, and fail to copy or represent it perfectly. Our ideas of modes are adequate otherwise (Book II, Ch. XXXI, §3–4).

So far I have been describing what we do when we make ideas of modes. We take the simple ideas we have or have had and manipulate them as we wish. We do so without regard to what we find in nature and it's for this reason that Locke calls our ideas of modes "originals."⁴⁹ Sometimes we make complex ideas to capture what's in nature, however. We thus notice which simple ideas go constantly together and combine them accordingly. This is what we do when we make ideas of substances. It's to this that we will turn our attention now.

When we get the simple ideas we call "yellow" and "shiny," we also usually have the idea we call "solidity." We assume that the qualities or powers which cause these simple ideas in us have some sort of support. This is because we can't imagine how yellowness, solidity and the like could subsist together unsupported. We combine said ideas together to represent what we've observed in the world and the complex idea we arrive at is an idea of a substance. In this case, the idea we arrive at is the idea we call "gold."⁵⁰ Our ideas of substances thus not only include the simple ideas we get together via experience but also the idea of support.

Since what we aim to do when we make ideas of substances is to represent what is in the world (Book IV, Ch. IV, §12), we adjust our ideas of substances according to what we find in nature.⁵¹ This is also why even though our ideas of modes can't help but be real, our idea of any

⁴⁹ Though we should remember, as I indicated in a footnote above, that often we do learn ideas of modes through their names and this happens when we learn the vocabulary of our given language as children. There is an archetype for a mode idea when we learn it this way, though it is not anything found in nature—it is someone else's idea. This is important to keep in mind as we proceed.

⁵⁰ Though we might want to add in "great weight," "ductility," "fusibility" and "solubility in *Aqua Regia*" (Book II, Ch. XXIII, §37).

⁵¹ See Book III, Ch. V, §3 and especially Book III, Ch. VI, §46–47—where Locke discusses how Adam would alter the idea he calls "gold" after observing different changes in it through experimentation. As should be clear, this marks a significant difference between our ideas of substances and our ideas of modes and Locke says as much. See Book II, Ch. XXXI, §3 and 13. See also Book III, Ch. IV, §2, Book III, Ch. V, §3 and Book III, Ch. VI, §28. This comes through in Book III, Ch. VI, §44–51 and Book III, Ch. IX, §9 as well. Also contrast what Locke says in Book III, Ch. VI, §46–47, where Locke discusses the way Adam makes, names and fine tunes his ideas of substances with Book III, Ch. VI, §44–45, where Locke discusses the way Adam makes and names his ideas of modes.

substance is real only if there is a thing in the world that actually matches it. Otherwise our idea of any substance is fantastical:

Our *complex* Ideas of *Substances*, being made all of them in reference to Things existing without us, and intended to be Representations of Substances, as they really are, are no farther *real*, than as they are such Combinations of simple *ideas*, as are really united, and co-exist in Things without us. On the contrary, those are *fantastical* which are made up of such Collections of simple *Ideas*, as were really never united, never found together in any Substance (Book II, Ch. XXX, §5).

Thus if we have an idea that includes having four legs, a mane, neighing and support, we have a substance idea that Locke would consider “real.” But if we have an idea that includes having four legs, a mane, neighing, a horn, wings and support, we have a substance idea that Locke would call “fantastical.” While there are things in the world that match the former idea, we can’t say the same about the latter (Book II, Ch. XXX, §5).

Our ideas of substances are supposed to conform to what exists in nature (Book III, Ch. VI, §10). Whether any one of our substance ideas is real thus depends upon what is in the world, and whether our idea represents any one of those things. A great many of our ideas of substances are real. (They wouldn’t do us much good otherwise!) But not one of our ideas of substances is adequate. To begin to understand why, I need to say more.

I mentioned above that the idea we call “gold” is an idea of a substance. This is true, although it’s important to note that Locke also calls the idea of support “substance.” There are thus the ideas we have of particular subsistent things and the idea we have of support. The latter is always an ingredient of the former. Both are called “substance,” though when Locke is being careful, he calls the former “particular substance” and the latter “substratum.”⁵²

⁵² “The Mind being ... furnished with a great number of the simple *Ideas*, conveyed in by the *Senses*, as they are found in exterior things, or by *Reflection* on its own Operations, takes notice also that a certain number of these simple *Ideas* go constantly together ... not imagining how these simple *Ideas* can subsist by themselves, we accustom our selves, to suppose some *Substratum*, wherein they do subsist, and from which they do result, which therefore we call *Substance*” (Book II, Ch. XXIII, §1).

[Locke referring to his writing in the *Essay*, but not quoting it]: ... [S]peaking in that place of the ideas of distinct substances, such as a man, horse, gold, &c. I say they are made up of certain combinations of simple ideas; which combinations are looked upon, each of them, as one simple idea, though they are many; and we call it by one name of substance ... from the custom of supposing a substratum, wherein that combination does subsist. So that in this paragraph I only give an account of the idea of distinct substances, such as oak, elephant, iron, &c. how, though they are made up of distinct complications ... yet they are looked on as one idea, called by one name, as making distinct sorts of substances. But that my notion of substance in general is quite different from these, and has no such combination of simple ideas in it, is evident from the immediately following words, where I say, [quoting himself in the *Essay*, Book II, Ch. XXIII, §2]: ‘the idea of pure substance in general is only a supposition of we know not what support of such qualities as are capable of producing simple ideas in us.’ And these two I plainly distinguish all along, particularly where I say, [Locke quoting himself in the *Essay*, Book II, Ch. XXIII, §6] ‘whatever therefore be the secret and abstract nature of substance in general, all the ideas we have of particular distinct substances are nothing but several combinations of simple ideas, co-existing in such, though unknown, cause of their union, as makes the whole subsist of itself’ (Locke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 17–18).

In this excerpt from Locke’s correspondence with Stillingfleet, we can see that Locke uses “substance” to refer to our ideas of particular subsistent things and our idea of substratum. We can also see that although some (like Stillingfleet) have conflated the claims Locke makes about particular substance and substratum, Locke contends that he maintains a clear distinction between the two throughout the *Essay*.

Importantly, Locke calls “substratum” a “supposition of we know not what.” He describes the nature of substratum as “secret” and “abstract” and this is because we finite creatures can’t penetrate substratum (see also Book IV, Ch. III, §23). This is the case whether substratum is lending support to gold, or any other particular substance—including a man, horse, oak, or elephant. About substratum Locke says: “We have no idea of what it is, but only a confused, obscure one of what it does” (Book II, Ch. XIII, §19).⁵³

At first it seems that Locke says no such thing about the ideas we call “gold” or “oak,” and the like. We must remember, however, that since every idea we have of any particular

⁵³ This is why Locke criticizes those who use “substratum” to do any heavy philosophical lifting.

subsistent thing is going to contain the idea of substratum, there is a degree to which they too fall short. This is what I take Locke to mean when he claims “The *Ideas* of *Substances* are such combinations of simple *Ideas*, as are taken to represent distinct particular things, subsisting by themselves; in which the supposed, or confused *Idea* of Substance, such as it is, is always the first and chief” (Book II, Ch. XII, §6).

There is thus a sense in which our ideas of substances don’t go as far as we’d like them to. We can’t really know anything about substratum, and this—at least in part—is what makes our ideas of particular substances inadequate. The other thing that makes our ideas of particular substances inadequate is that we can never capture all of the qualities or powers any particular substance has (Book II, Ch. XXXI, §8).

Part of the reason for this failure is that we couldn’t possibly witness all of the changes any particular substance might undergo. The other problem is that while we assume there is a cause of all of the qualities and powers we observe in any particular subsistent thing, Locke thinks this cause or “real essence” is not something we have access to. The internal constitution or real essence of any particular substance lies beyond the scope of human understanding (Book III, Ch. VI, §6 for instance).

This is why if we assume we are trying to represent real essence when we make an idea of any particular substance, we create an idea that is especially inadequate for a reason beyond those described above (Book III, Ch. VI). This is also why Locke thinks those who claim we sort the world into substance kinds based upon real essences are mistaken. In what follows I will say a bit more about this last point.

As we saw earlier, the nominal essence of any sort or kind is a general idea that includes the collection of simple ideas or features we take any member of that kind to have. Locke thinks

that whatever simple ideas we choose to include when we make the nominal essence of any substance kind is going to be partly determined by real essence. This is because the real essence of any particular substance is the cause of the qualities or powers we observe (and said qualities or powers are the cause of the simple ideas we have). Since we can't know anything more about real essence than this, however, it can't be the case that we use the real essences of substances to carve up the world. That is, it can't be that we use any information about the natures of the real essences of substances to create the nominal essences of substance kinds (Book III, Ch. III and VI).⁵⁴

In fact, Locke denies that the real essences of substances actually parse them into kinds. In other words, Locke denies that the world comes pre-sorted into substance kinds. Locke claims that substance kinds are the product of the human understanding.⁵⁵ This becomes clear if we look at the great gradation of particular substances in the world and the many arbitrary decisions we make when it comes to classifying these entities into kinds (Book III, Ch. VI, §12). So while the real essences of particular substances inform what simple ideas we *can* include in the nominal essence of a kind, what nominal essences we create and the way the substances in the world are divided is really up to us.⁵⁶ This is what commentators mean when they say Locke is a nominalist when it comes to kinds (see also Book IV, Ch. IV, §13).

⁵⁴ It's also worth noting that the species or kinds of substances were named before the philosophers came up with the notion of "real essence" and Locke makes this point in Book III, Ch. VI, §24.

⁵⁵ "The essences of the sorts of things, and consequently the sorting of Things, is the Workmanship of the Understanding" (Book III, Ch. III, §12; see also Book III, Ch. III, §13).

⁵⁶ "Concerning the real essences of corporeal substances (to mention these only) there are, if I mistake not, two opinions. The one is of those who, using the word essence for they know not what, suppose a certain number of those essences, according to which all natural things are made, and wherein they do exactly every one of them partake, and so become of this or that species. The other and more rational opinion is of those who look on all natural things to have a real, but unknown, constitution of their insensible parts; from which flow those sensible qualities which serve us to distinguish them one from another, according as we have occasion to rank them into sorts, under common denominations. The former of these opinions, which supposes these essences as a certain number of forms or moulds,

Locke thus distinguishes between the real and nominal essence of substances or substance kinds. While we know the latter, we can't possibly know the former. While any member of a substance kind will share the latter, we can't say the same about the former.⁵⁷

Locke makes no such distinction when it comes to our ideas of modes, however (Book III, Ch. III, §17 and 18; see also Book III, Ch. X, §19). And since we know the nominal essence of every mode kind,⁵⁸ this means we know the real essence of every mode kind.⁵⁹

wherein all natural things that exist are cast, and do equally partake, has, I imagine, very much perplexed the knowledge of natural things. The frequent productions of monsters, in all the species of animals, and of changelings, and other strange issues of human birth, carry with them difficulties, not possible to consist with this hypothesis; since it is as impossible that two things partaking exactly of the same real essence should have different properties, as that two figures partaking of the same real essence of a circle should have different properties. But were there no other reason against it, yet the supposition of essences that cannot be known; and the making of them, nevertheless, to be that which distinguishes the species of things, is so wholly useless and unserviceable to any part of our knowledge, that that alone were sufficient to make us lay it by, and content ourselves with such essences of the sorts or species of things as come within the reach of our knowledge: which, when seriously considered, will be found, as I have said, to be nothing else but, those abstract complex ideas to which we have annexed distinct general names" (Book III, Ch. III, §17).

⁵⁷ Locke might mean by this that we can't know whether every member of a substance kind has the same real essence, since we can't penetrate real essence. What I really take this to mean, however, is that because the real essence of any particular substance is its internal constitution, each particular substance's real essence is going to be numerically distinct. Maybe what we can say then is that while every member of any substance kind is going to have the same nominal essence, we can only assume that every member of any substance kind will have *similar* real essences (Book III, Ch. X, §20).

⁵⁸ Though this isn't unique to modes. As we have seen, we always know the nominal essence of any kind, for it just is the general idea we have created.

⁵⁹ This is a bit confusing and what this means can be cashed out in several different ways, though they might all amount to the same thing in the end. One way of putting it is that because the only archetype an idea of a mode has is itself, the real essence of any mode idea is the idea itself. In other words, the real essence of any mode kind *just is* the nominal essence of that kind. Another perhaps equally good way of putting it is that because we don't intend to represent anything in the world when we make ideas of modes, we don't take it that there is some unknown entity which is the cause of the simple ideas we get constantly together. In other words, modes just don't have real essences. This seems to be what Roger Woolhouse (1971) had in mind when he described Locke's distinction between substance and mode. He might have been onto something, though I'm not sure that this is a secondary distinction (rather than a distinction that just falls out of Locke's other commitments) as Woolhouse seems to insist. This kind of interpretation also has the consequence that when we say we know the real essence of any mode kind, what we really mean is there is no essence we don't know, because there is no such essence to begin with. I'm not sure if this sounds right. Finally, while it might be the case that no mode (properly speaking) has a real essence, I am a bit uncomfortable with the claim that everything that doesn't have a real essence is a mode (and this seems to be a consequence or feature of Woolhouse's position).

Based upon what I have said thus far, it should be clear that while there are very few things we can know about substances (Book II, Ch. XXIII, §29; Book IV, Ch. III, §10–15), we face little to no limitations when it comes to our ideas of modes. This is what leads Locke to claim that while the best we can achieve is probable opinion within natural philosophy—where our focus is on substances (Book IV, Ch. III, §26; Book IV, Ch. XII, §9–10)—we can attain demonstrative knowledge in mathematics and ethics (Book III, Ch. XI, §16; Book IV, Ch. III, §18–19; Book IV, Ch. IV, §6–8; Book IV, Ch. XII, §8; Book IV, Ch. XII, §11)—where our focus is on modes.

Up until this point, I have largely limited our discussion to what Locke has to say about our *ideas* of substances and modes.⁶⁰ Locke does make some ontological claims regarding substance and mode, however, and I will turn our attention to these below.

D. Substance and Mode: Ontological Claims

It's hard to say what Locke's ontological commitments are when it comes to modes. It can tend to look like Locke thinks our ideas of modes don't have correspondents at all. In other words, it can seem like Locke thinks modes *just are ideas*. It appears we get some evidence for this when Locke claims the simple modes we call "hour" and "foot" have no effect on duration or space (Book II, Ch. XIII and XIV). Moreover, it looks like we get confirmation that this is the case in Book II, Ch. XXII, §1, where Locke claims, "Modes being ... such Combinations of simple *Ideas*, are not looked upon to be the characteristical Marks of any real Beings that have a steady existence, but scattered and independent *Ideas*, put together by the Mind."

I don't think we ought to jump to this conclusion, however. This is because, as we have seen, "murder" is a mode for Locke—and, unfortunately, murder is not just an idea. I thus want

⁶⁰ Though some metaphysical or ontological claims have of course snuck in.

to suggest that while we don't aim to represent anything in the world when we make ideas of modes, there are times we see that which matches these ideas.⁶¹ This always involves substances, however.

Thus although Locke thinks we can have and name the ideas we call "gratitude" and "murder" without meaning to represent anything in the world, if we are ever to see that which looks like it matches up with the ideas we call "gratitude" and "murder" in the world, it would be because a thinking substance expressed thankfulness, or one thinking substance killed an innocent one. In other words, there is no gratitude without a substance doing the thanking, and there is no murder without a substance doing the murdering. Likewise, no matter how clear our idea of a triangle is, most of us take it that triangles don't actually exist, except insofar as substances are configured in a triangular way. Perhaps this (at least in part) is what Locke means when he claims the name "mode" stands for complex ideas, which "however compounded, contain not in them the supposition of subsisting by themselves, but are considered as Dependences on, or Affections of Substances; such are the *Ideas* signified by the Words *Triangle, Gratitude, Murder, etc.*" (Book II, Ch. XII, §4).

With this in mind we can say that while our ideas of modes don't aim to represent anything in nature, this doesn't mean we can't see that which matches our ideas of modes in the world. We do. We can't have this correspondence without substances, however. Finally, we generally don't take whatever corresponds to our ideas of modes to be that which has a lasting or steady existence—and this marks a significant difference between modes and substances. If we return to Book II, Ch. XXII, §1 and consider the passage (nearly) in full, this becomes clear:

We are now in the next place to consider those we call *Mixed Modes*, such are the Complex *Ideas*, we mark by the names *Obligation, Drunkenness, a Lye, etc.* which

⁶¹ Locke certainly suggests this as well.

consisting of several Combinations of simple *ideas* of different kinds, I have called *mixed Modes*, to distinguish them from the more simple Modes, which consist of only simple *ideas* of the same kind. These mixed Modes being also such Combinations of simple *Ideas*, as are not looked upon to be the characteristical Marks of any real Beings that have a steady existence, but scattered and independent *Ideas*, put together by the Mind are thereby distinguished from the complex *Ideas* of Substances. (Book II, Ch. XXII, §1).⁶²

We can thus conclude that Locke thinks particular substances exist. We can also conclude that Locke thinks these particular things tend to have a lasting or steady existence.⁶³

If we return to the initial definition Locke gives for “substance” we will remember that Locke additionally claims that substances “subsist by themselves” (Book II, Ch. XII, §6).⁶⁴ Locke doesn’t explain what he means by this claim, but it’s worth thinking about what he could mean by it as many commentators invoke this claim when they attempt to resolve the apparent

⁶² I think this passage entails that our ideas of both simple and mixed modes don’t mark real beings that have a lasting or steady existence. Margaret Atherton has expressed worry about this claim, given Locke’s treatment of duration. It is worth noting, however, that our idea of duration is a simple idea. This suggests to me that it is not an idea of a mode, or we need not read Locke as so committed. It also seems that when we modify the idea we call “duration” to get the modes we call “hour,” “day,” etc. we don’t mean to represent a being with steady or lasting existence. We just mean to create and name ideas that help us navigate the world. Then again it seems odd to think the idea we call “eternity” is not something we take to mark steady or lasting existence—though it would be strange to think that the idea we call “eternity” marks a *real being* that has steady or lasting existence. Thus perhaps it’s the “real being” bit that matters most. That being said, so many of the modes Locke discusses are entities that don’t have a steady or lasting existence (parades, dances, murders, etc.), so I tend to think that reading Locke as I have here is in keeping with what he means.

⁶³ Or at least more so than modes (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §2). Here too I think the claim is that particular substances are the kinds of entities that persist.

⁶⁴ Some might worry that what Locke says in Book II, Ch. XII is just about our ideas of substances and modes. What Locke says here doesn’t have as much ontological import as I am supposing. But when Locke claims that our ideas of substances are “ideas as are taken to represent distinct particular things subsisting by themselves” (Book II, Ch. XII, §6), he seems to be making a claim that is as much about our ideas as it is about the objects of our ideas. In addition, the extent to which any chapter in Book II is just about our ideas is an open question. For example, in Book II, Ch. VIII, where Locke discusses “some further considerations of our simple ideas” he certainly makes epistemological claims, but most commentators think he is making some ontological points about qualities in this chapter as well. Thus while I contend that what Locke says in Book II, Ch. XII ought not be read outside of the context of what Locke says about substance, mode and our ideas of each elsewhere, I think what Locke says in this section of the text is something that we ought to consider when we work to understand Locke’s ontological commitments.

tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons.⁶⁵

Some have suggested that while modes depend on substances for their subsistence, substances don't depend upon (other) substances for their subsistence—and this is what Locke means when he claims that substances "subsist by themselves." At first this sounds appealing. Descartes held this view and Locke would have had this in mind. It's worth noting, however, that Locke thinks every finite substance depends upon another substance for its subsistence—and that substance is God.⁶⁶ The other thing worth noting is that finite substances also depend upon other finite substances in the environment for their subsistence. It doesn't seem like this is something Locke would want to deny.

It could be that when Locke claims substances "subsist by themselves," he is making a clarificatory remark. He is clarifying that the dependence relationship between substances and modes goes only one way: modes depend upon substances for their subsistence but not vice

⁶⁵ Some might worry that I am looking for an explanation that's just not in the text. Descartes established that substances subsist by themselves and this is something that Locke just inherits. Moreover, this is why Locke doesn't explain what he means when he makes this claim. As I suggest below, this may be the case. But it looks like Locke thinks particular substances depend upon other finite substances for their subsistence, though this is something Descartes denies. I thus want to suggest that even if Locke doesn't explain what he means when he makes this claim he might not have *exactly* what Descartes has in mind when he says something very similar. In addition, it should be noted that much is made of this claim in the secondary literature debate over the ontological status of Lockean persons. It seems LoLordo assumes that any entity that depends upon a (finite?) substance is a mode, and while Rickless doesn't assume this, he does assume that while no entity can depend upon another distinct non-composite substance for its persistence and be a substance, particular substances do depend upon those substances which comprise them (as parts). There is thus reason to pause and think about what Locke means when he claims that substances "subsist by themselves."

⁶⁶ God is the only substance that doesn't depend upon another for its subsistence. This is what we mean when we say God has necessary existence, though any finite substance's existence is only contingent. Note: Descartes surely doesn't deny this. But he does claim that no finite substance depends upon other finite substances for its existence. In addition, it looks like a plant depends upon its body for its subsistence. Plants must be composed of atoms to exist at all. And bodies or atoms are substances for Locke. So too (as we have seen) are plants and animals. We thus have substances depending upon substances for their subsistence. (Moreover, this is the case despite the fact that plants and animals don't depend upon the *identity* of said substances for their persistence—as we will see.)

versa. Given Locke's rather non-traditional conception of "mode," and the fact that Locke defines "mode" right before he gives the initial definition of "substance," where he makes this claim, this seems to make sense. That being said, this could get us into trouble if it turns out that consciousness is a mode, since every person's persistence is determined by the persistence of her consciousness.⁶⁷

Thus it might just be that while modes depend upon substances, any dependence a particular substance has on any other is very different from the dependence a mode has on a substance. It seems, for instance, that the way in which murder depends upon substances is quite different from the way in which a man depends upon the substances that compose him or the substances in his environment, and this could be what leads Locke to claim that substances "subsist by themselves."⁶⁸

With this in mind I think we can say that particular substances exist in the world. We can also say that particular substances exist with some steadiness. In addition modes are dependent upon substances for their subsistence, but substances are not dependent upon other substances in the same way, and substances may not depend upon modes at all.

At this point I want to say something more about the qualities of particular substances. Locke claims that we know any particular substance through its qualities. Given that we don't know anything about the substratum or real essence of any particular subsisting entity, and the simple ideas that comprise the complex idea we have of any particular substance are caused by that thing's qualities, this makes sense. To this we can add the following: Locke calls some of

⁶⁷ I happen to think that consciousness is a power for Locke (and powers need not be modes), but this is still worth considering.

⁶⁸ It is worth noting that it's a bit hard to see how some modes depend upon substances for their subsistence. Take for instance an hour or a foot. Is it that an hour or foot don't exist without the substances we measure them by? (There is just duration and space otherwise?) If so, is this significantly different from the way a mode like murder depends upon substance? It's unclear.

these qualities “primary” and some “secondary.” Primary qualities include solidity, extension, figure, mobility, and number (Book II, Ch. VIII, §9). Secondary qualities include white, cold, smooth and the like (Book II, Ch. VIII, §8). While the former are properly thought to be *in* the particular substances we observe, the latter are just powers in said entities to cause these ideas in us.⁶⁹

There is a lot of debate in the secondary literature over whether what Locke says about primary and secondary qualities amounts to an ontological distinction,⁷⁰ but I won’t say much about that here, because it doesn’t matter for our purposes. Suffice it to say that Locke thinks particular substances have qualities or powers and these can be material (like solidity) or immaterial (like thinking).

With this in mind we should turn our attention to substratum. In Locke’s lengthy correspondence with Stillingfleet, it becomes clear that Stillingfleet thinks Locke denies the existence of substratum and raises this as an objection to Locke’s view (Locke, 1823/1975, vol. IV, first letter). Locke responds to this objection by claiming that he never denies the existence of substratum, nor is such a thing a consequence of his view. To drive the point home, Locke directs Stillingfleet’s attention to the many sections in the *Essay* where he discusses substratum.⁷¹ Nothing therein amounts to the denial of the existence of substratum.

⁶⁹ Cold, then, isn’t properly speaking in the snow itself. It’s a power in the snow to cause the idea we call “cold” in us.

⁷⁰ This is because it looks like Locke is committed to the claim that these powers just are the substance’s primary qualities (Book II, Ch. VIII, §10). (See especially Ed McCann for more on this.)

⁷¹ [Locke quoting himself in the *Essay*, Book II, Ch. XXIII, §4] “When we talk or think of any particular sort of corporeal substances, as horse, stone, &c. though the idea we have of either of them be but the complication or collection of those several simple ideas of sensible qualities which we use to find united in the thing called horse or stone; yet because we cannot conceive how they should subsist alone, nor one in another, we suppose them existing in, and supported by some common subject, which support we denote by the name substance; though it be certain we have no clear and distinct idea of that thing we suppose a support” (Letter 1, p. 5–6). [Locke quoting himself in the *Essay*, Book II, Ch. XXIII, §5] “And again, ‘The same happens concerning the operations of the mind, viz.

Locke additionally goes on to argue that so long as any quality or power exists, substratum *has* to exist:

Nay, as long as there is any simple idea or sensible quality left, according to my way of arguing, substance cannot be discarded; because all simple ideas, all sensible qualities, carry with them a supposition of a substratum to exist in, and of a substance wherein they inhere: and of this that whole chapter is so full, that I challenge any one who reads it to think I have almost, or one jot discarded substance out of the reasonable part of the world (Locke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 7).

Given that Locke is committed to qualities and powers existing, it looks like Locke has to think substratum exists. Moreover, it's important to note that just because Locke claims our idea of substratum is confused and inadequate, this doesn't mean substratum can't exist. In other words, it's not an unforeseen or unintended consequence of Locke's view that substratum doesn't exist.

The clarity or adequacy of our idea of x has no bearing whatsoever on whether x exists or not. That is, it's not the case that when Locke calls an idea "inadequate" he means to say that the intended referent of that idea doesn't exist. Locke is pretty explicit about this in both the *Essay* (Book II, Ch. XXIII) and in his correspondence with Stillingfleet. Locke even goes on to highlight the heretical consequences that would result if this were his view:

Would not your lordship think you were a little too hardly dealt with, if for acknowledging yourself to have a very imperfect and inadequate idea of God, or of several other things which, in this very treatise, you confess our understandings come short in and cannot comprehend, you should be accused to be one of these gentlemen that have almost discarded God, or those other mysterious things, whereof you contend we have very imperfect and inadequate ideas, out of the reasonable world? ... the being of things in the world depends not on our ideas (Locke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 8–9).

thinking, reasoning, fearing, &c. which we considering not to subsist of themselves, nor apprehending how they can belong to body, or be produced by it, we are apt to think these the actions of some other substance, which we call spirit: whereby yet it is evident, that having no other idea or notion of matter, but something wherein those many sensible qualities, which affect our senses, do subsist; by supposing a substance, wherein thinking, knowing, doubting, and a power of moving, &c. do subsist, we have as clear a notion of the nature of substance of spirit, as we have of body; the one being supposed to be (without knowing what it is) the substratum to those simple ideas we have from without; and the other supposed (with a like ignorance of what it is) to be the substratum to those operations, which we experiment in our selves within" (Locke, 1823/1963, vol. IV, p. 6).

We thus can't take Locke's criticisms of the Scholastics' use of "substratum" to be a claim with ontological import.⁷² As a result, we can say that Locke thinks there are particular subsisting things in the world and every one of these things' qualities or powers—whether material or immaterial—are supported by substrata.

That being said, we should note that when Locke calls a substance "material" or "immaterial" all he means is that its qualities or powers are "material" or "immaterial." He doesn't think we can know whether the substratum that supports material qualities could also support immaterial qualities.⁷³ In addition, Locke claims that thinking isn't inconsistent with the notions of extension or solidity.⁷⁴ This means that thinking isn't inconsistent with matter, or that thinking matter is logically possible. And this means that God could have superadded the power of thinking to matter. In fact we have to think this is possible since we think God is omnipotent, and what it means for God to be omnipotent is that God has the power to do anything that is logically possible (Book IV, Ch. III, §6). Thus although it's the case that Locke speaks of both material and immaterial qualities (and substances), and Locke doesn't think immaterial qualities are reducible to material qualities, Locke is agnostic when it comes to substance dualism.⁷⁵

⁷² Locke does think substratum exists. This, of course, is why for all of the negative things Locke says about our idea of substratum he never says our idea of substratum is fantastical.

⁷³ "It is no harder to conceive how thinking should exist without matter, than how matter should think" (Book II, Ch. XXIII, §32; Book IV, Ch. X, §9).

⁷⁴ In other words, there is nothing about the concepts "thought" and "matter" that would allow us to deduce that one excludes the other (Book IV, Ch. III, §11).

⁷⁵ The secondary literature has little debate about Locke's agnosticism. Commentators generally accept that Locke is agnostic about substance dualism for finite substances (especially Book IV, Ch. III, §28). However, it's unclear Locke considers one view more likely than the other. In the "Identity and Diversity" chapter, Locke suggests dualism is more likely, though he doesn't explain why. Also, some of the claims Locke makes in his discussion of God and God's existence could count as evidence that Locke thinks dualism is more likely. (Note: I know that regardless of Locke's agnosticism about substance dualism he thinks God is immaterial. (Locke's agnosticism just extends to finite substances.) But some of what Locke says in these sections of the text make it seem like he could also think that substance dualism is true for finite substances as well.) Then again, some commentators have thought that when Locke claims the soul thinks not always he says something that coheres better with a non-reductive form of materialism (Jolley, 1999, pp. 92–93; Bennett, 1994, p. 114).

It therefore looks like we can say Locke thinks particular substances, with material and immaterial qualities, exist, and said qualities are always supported by substrata—though whether the substratum that supports material qualities is the same as the substratum that supports immaterial qualities is not something we can know.⁷⁶

To this we can also add that Locke thinks some particular substances⁷⁷ are natural and some particular substances are artificial. I take it that the latter are the products of human creation and include entities like clocks and tables, while the former are the products of God's creation and include entities like men and gold (Book III, Ch. VI, §40). In addition, some particular substances are singular and others are collective. An example of the former would be a man and an example of the latter would be an army. Said claims haven't received much attention, but several of the claims Locke makes about substance in the "Identity and Diversity" chapter have. It's to these that we will turn our attention below.

To start Locke mentions a distinction between simple and compounded substances (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §3). Many commentators have done a lot of work to make sense of this distinction, and this is because they think it is the key to understanding Locke's discussion of identity. Some, like Alston and Bennett, have suggested that simple or basic substances are substances which don't contain any parts, while compounded substances are substances which

⁷⁶ There is a long-standing debate over whether Locke thinks substratum and real essence are one and the same thing. I tend to think that while there is much ambiguity regarding this question in the *Essay* itself, there is evidence that Locke thinks the idea we call "real essence" and the idea we call "substratum" pick out two different entities in the world if we examine Locke's correspondence with Stillingfleet (and look to Locke's second letter in particular). This is not my considered opinion, but an inclination I have. I have relegated it to a footnote (just like LoLordo and others) because as it turns out it doesn't much matter for my purposes. This is because if and when Locke mentions a change in substratum when he discusses the persistence of persons, it doesn't look like he is referencing a change in a person's *own* substratum. And it's only if this were the case and substratum and real essence are identical that there would be a potential problem.

⁷⁷ Though Locke uses the term "things" rather than "substances."

do contain parts (which they can gain or lose) (39). Under Alston and Bennett's interpretation, a single atom is a simple substance. Something like a horse would be a compounded substance.

In contrast Martha Brandt Bolton has argued that what makes a substance simple or compounded for Locke is whether it can gain or lose parts. As Bolton reads Locke both simple and compounded substances can have parts, but while compounded substances can gain or lose said parts, simple ones cannot. For Bolton, then, a horse is a compounded substance, but a mass of atoms is a simple substance (despite the fact that it contains parts).

These are the two competing interpretations of the simple/compounded substance distinction circulating in the secondary literature, but one could just as easily imagine that Locke calls those substances that have one substratum "simple" and those that have more than one "compounded." The trouble is, "simple" can mean many things. Moreover, Locke says nothing about this distinction. He merely mentions it. I thus think that while commentators have done a lot of work to get clear on what the distinction between simple and compounded substances amounts to, there is little reason to favor one interpretation over any other. It's also worth noting that Locke references this distinction only once (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §3). It doesn't occur in any of Locke's other discussions of substance, including his Correspondence with Stillingfleet, where he discusses substance and personal identity at great length. I therefore think that it would be strange if it were an essential piece to Locke's picture of substance or the key to understanding Locke's discussion of personal identity.

If we examine the beginning of the "Identity and Diversity" chapter, we will notice two other interesting claims to keep in the back of our minds as we proceed. One is that Locke claims no two things of the same kind can be in the same place at the same time (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §1). The other is that Locke claims we have ideas but of three sorts of substances: God, finite

intelligences, and bodies (Book II, Ch. XXII, §2). I will say something brief about the former and then turn our attention to the latter.

When Locke claims that no two things of the same kind can be in the same place at the same time, many take him to mean that no two thinking substances could be in the same place at the same time and no two material substances could be in the same place at the same time. This falls pretty much in line with tradition when it comes to such principles, and many who hold mode interpretations of Locke on persons appeal to this interpretation of the place-time-kind principle to argue that persons cannot be substances.⁷⁸ Since Locke is agnostic about substance dualism,⁷⁹ it's difficult to see what this would look like, however.⁸⁰ That is, since Locke thinks it could be the case that the substratum that supports material qualities also supports immaterial qualities, it's difficult to picture what this principle amounts to if this is what he means by it.⁸¹

In Chapter 5 I suggest that if we put the place-time-kind principle back into context it might be the case that Locke is making more of an epistemological than ontological point when he makes this claim.⁸² That is, I argue that Locke is making more of a modest or minimal claim

⁷⁸ Uzgalis, for instance, claims that if persons are substances and persons are thinking things, and souls are substances which are thinking things, then we would get two thinking things in the same place at the same time—and this is something Locke prohibits when he posits the place-time-kind principle. I will treat this in Chapter 5 in more detail.

⁷⁹ When it comes to finite substances.

⁸⁰ Others suggest that when Locke claims no two things of the same kind can be in the same place at the same time, he means no two simple substances can be in the same place at the same time and no two compounded substances can be in the same place at the same time. Given that we don't know what Locke means by "simple" or "compounded" it's hard to tell whether this is right. It's also looks like Locke is committed to the claim that an atom and a soul can be co-located and under both of the most cited interpretations of Locke on the simple/compounded substance distinction, both of these substances are simple. I will discuss this further in the next chapter.

⁸¹ Wouldn't it then just amount to no two bodies being in the same place at the same time? Or if not, would it amount to no two substances that have material qualities can be in the same place at the same time and no two substances that have immaterial qualities can be in the same place at the same time? It's unclear. Though clearly Locke does not mean what Descartes means when he posits this principle.

⁸² Moreover I take it this can be the case though it's certainly a feature of Locke's view that no two bodies can inhabit the same space at the same time due to solidity.

than it might at first seem and the above interpretation assumes, and if this is the case persons could indeed be substances, though they are often co-located with souls, which are also substances. Since I treat the place-time-kind principle in depth in that chapter, I won't say more about it here.

Let's now return to the claim Locke makes about our ideas of substances. As I mentioned, Locke claims we have ideas but of three sorts of substances at the beginning of the "Identity and Diversity" chapter, and these are the ideas of God, finite intelligences and bodies. Much has been made of this claim in the secondary literature, and once again this is a claim that is invoked when commentators attempt to make sense of Locke's discussion of persons.

This claim strikes many as quite odd, for when Locke makes this claim it looks like he is saying we have ideas of just three different sorts of substances, but elsewhere Locke discusses our ideas of all different sorts of substances. As we have seen this includes not only the idea we call "God," but also the ideas we call "man," "oak," "horse," and so on. In an effort to read Locke as maintaining a consistent position, many commentators argue that when Locke claims we have ideas but of three sorts of substances, he is claiming that we have ideas of three sorts of *simple* substances.

It could well be that when Locke claims we have ideas but of three sorts of substances he restricts his usage of "substance" to include only simple substances. As we have seen, however, it's hard to say what makes any substance simple for Locke, and this makes it difficult to determine whether this is what Locke has in mind or not. I happen to think that when Locke makes this claim, he is just claiming that we have ideas of substances that have immaterial qualities and those that have material qualities. While God is the only eternal and infinite substance that has immaterial qualities, there are all sorts of substances that fall under the other

two categories, including men, oaks, horses, gold and the other Lockean substances we have been discussing all along.⁸³ This passage is thus less of an oddity than many commentators have made it out to be.

With this in mind we should turn our attention to what Locke has to say about power before concluding. As we have seen, Locke thinks substances have powers (Book II, Ch. XXI, §2; Book II, Ch. XXI, §3; Book II, Ch. XXI, §16; Book II, Ch. XXI, §72; Book II, Ch. XXII, §11; Book II, Ch. XXIII, §7; Book II, Ch. XXIII, §8; Book II, Ch. XXIII, §10; Book II, Ch. XXIII, §37; Book III, Ch. IX, §1; Book III, Ch. IX §17; Book III, Ch. XI, §21; Book IV, Ch. III, §7; Book IV, Ch. III, §9; Book IV, Ch. VII, §15). If we read on in Book II, Ch. XXI, and examine what Locke has to say in section 16, it becomes clear that Locke is committed to something even stronger than this:

Tis plain then, That the *Will* is nothing but one Power or Ability, and *Freedom* another Power or Ability: So that to ask, whether the *Will has Freedom*, is to ask whether one Power has another Power, one Ability another Ability; a Question at first sight too grossly absurd to make a Dispute, or need an Answer. For who is it that sees not, that *Powers* belong only to *Agents*, and *are Attributes only of Substances* ... So that this way of putting the Question, *viz.* whether the *Will be free*, is in effect to ask, whether the *Will* be a Substance, an Agent, or at least to suppose it, since Freedom can properly be attributed to nothing else.

⁸³ I also want to suggest that it looks like what Locke says about our ideas of three sorts of substances in Book II, Ch. XXVII, §2 is reminiscent of what Locke says in his earlier discussion of power. In Book II, Ch. XXI, §1, Locke starts his discussion of power by telling us that we get the idea of power from the particular substances in the world. Some powers are active and others are passive, though the latter are more accurately called “passions.” Some entities have both active and passive powers. These are called “finite spirits.” God contains only active powers (because God is immutable). Many bodies seem to contain only passive powers, but whether all matter is wholly destitute of active power is not something we can know.

It thus could be that what Locke means when he makes this claim is that we have ideas of a substance that contains only active powers (God), ideas of the sorts of substances that contain both active and passive powers (finite spirits) and ideas of the sorts of substances that contain only passive powers (bodies). While there is only one substance with only active powers (God), there are many different kinds of substances which fall into the other two categories.

On this interpretation Locke’s claim in Book II, Ch. XXVII, §2 is consistent with Locke’s discussions of particular substance kinds elsewhere. Moreover, it doesn’t rely on a distinction Locke says nothing informative about. That being said, I am merely speculating here.

From this passage we can come to two important conclusions: 1) Locke thinks powers belong only to substances. 2) Locke thinks only substances are agents. We can thus say that anything that has powers is a substance and if an entity is an agent, it is a substance. Finally, in Book II, Ch. XXI, Locke makes clear that thinking is a power (Book II, Ch. XXI, §6) and no power can have a power: “*Liberty*, which is but a power ... cannot be an attribute or modification of the *Will*, which is also but a power.” (Book 2, Ch. 21, §14). Or, in other words, powers aren’t reified. These are commitments we ought to keep in mind as we work to determine the ontological status of Lockean persons.

E. Conclusion

In this chapter I have worked to provide a thorough treatment of Locke on substance, mode and our ideas of each. It should be clear that Locke thinks we are up to something very different when we make ideas of modes than when we make ideas of substances.⁸⁴ It should also be clear that while Locke doesn’t deny that there are correspondents to our ideas of modes, seeing what corresponds to our ideas of modes—in the world—is always dependent upon substances being in those states. Finally, although Locke doesn’t have an entirely traditional conception of “mode,” it’s difficult to discern how far his conception of this ontological category actually strays from tradition, or what entities are included in it.⁸⁵

It should also be clear that Locke thinks the objects of our ideas of substances exist. Locke makes more concrete ontological claims about particular subsistent things than he does

⁸⁴ And Locke says as much in his discussion of Adam (Book III, Ch. VII).

⁸⁵ Are powers modes for Locke? If so does this mean that qualities are? I tend to think not, but it’s unclear.

modes (though our knowledge is limited when it comes to substances)⁸⁶ and many of these are important to keep in mind as we proceed. I suspect that what Locke says about substance, power and agency commits him to persons being substances, but making a case for this will require more in the way of exploration and argumentation. This is the task I take up in the next chapter.

⁸⁶ And there are a lot of questions that arise about Locke's ontological commitments when it comes to substance. We might, for instance, wonder how much of a theory of substance Locke has (McCann suggests he has very little in the way of a theory or a "no theory of substance") or why Locke claims only substances can have powers. Exploring these issues here would take us too far from the task at hand, but it's worth keeping them in mind (and they will certainly be the topic of future research on my end).

IV. AN EVALUATION OF THE MODE AND SUBSTANCE APPROACHES

A. Introduction

As we learned in the previous chapter, it's only when we follow Locke through the twists and turns of the *Essay* and his correspondence with Stillingfleet, that we really begin to get an understanding of Locke on substance and mode, and how to clarify the ambiguities in his initial definitions of each. Many of the claims Locke makes about substance and mode are epistemological, though Locke does make some ontological claims, and both are important to keep in mind as we evaluate the proposed interpretive resolutions to the apparent tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons.

In this chapter we will work to determine whether either the Mode Approach or the Substance Approach resolve this tension in a way that is satisfying—and come to some understanding of Locke's ontological commitments, when it comes to persons, as a result. In what follows I will argue that if we consider Locke's definition of "person" in light of what we have just learned about Locke on substance and mode, we have evidence that we ought to embrace a substance reading of Locke on persons. Nevertheless, even the most accepted version of the Substance Approach (Alston and Bennett's) doesn't get us to a wholly satisfying reading of Locke on persons, if we consider Locke's discussion of personal identity within the context of the rest of the *Essay*, and Locke's correspondence with Stillingfleet.

B. The Mode Approach

We will begin by once again turning our attention to the Mode Approach. As we have seen, those who utilize the Mode Approach tailor or alter Locke's definition of "person" to match the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons. Those who follow this approach claim

that Lockean persons are modes (rather than substances), and think Locke's claim that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person is consistent with Locke's definition of "person," as a result.

Law claims that if we read Locke as having been careless with his definition of "person," we can alter Locke's definition of "person" to match the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons. We should think that Locke meant to claim that persons are modes of thinking intelligent beings, rather than thinking intelligent beings in themselves (or substances), and rephrase his definition of "person" accordingly, so we can make it consistent with the claim that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person.

It is worth considering whether Law was right in reading Locke in this way, as it not only provides a possible resolution to the apparent tension we started with; it's also an interpretation that has gained considerable support amongst commentators as of late. Udo Thiel, Antonia LoLordo and Galen Strawson⁸⁷ all consider Law's interpretation of Locke to be accurate and sympathetic—though often overlooked. I will explain why I think we ought not embrace Law's interpretation of Locke despite its growing popularity.

At this point, we should consider something that is implicit in Reid's response to Locke, as quoted earlier,⁸⁸ and which deserves our full attention now: When Locke reaches the section of the "Identity and Diversity" chapter (§9), where he first discusses personal identity, a key point becomes clear: If we want to determine the persistence conditions of a thing—whether it be something as complex as a person, or as simple as a group of atoms—we need to be sure we

⁸⁷ Udo Thiel (1981, 2011), Antonia LoLordo (2010) and Galen Strawson (2011) all support Law's reading of Locke. However, Antonia LoLordo and Ruth Mattern (1980) give additional reasons for reading Lockean persons as modes. William Uzgalis (1990) offers a more extreme mode interpretation and, although I won't consider the details of his position here, I will consider objections he has raised against my own toward the end of the chapter.

⁸⁸ See Chapter 2.

know what we mean by “person” or “group of atoms.”⁸⁹ This is because the way in which we apply the idea we call “identity” depends upon how we conceive of the thing to which we are applying it.

We thus must first get clear on what persons are, before we can determine what it takes for any person to maintain identity over time. This is something that Locke makes explicit,⁹⁰ and why Locke begins his discussion of personal identity by defining “person.” Given this, it looks as if reading Locke as having been careless with his definition of “person” clashes with what Locke actually claims, and our interpretive emphasis ought be on what “person” stands for, rather than the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons, when we attempt to resolve the tension between the two.

This makes Law’s Mode Approach look a lot less appealing than it did initially. But, this on its own doesn’t mean that we ought to abandon a mode reading of Locke on persons. Even if our focus should be on Locke’s definition of “person,” rather than the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons, and Locke calls both persons and particular substances “things” or “beings,” this does not necessarily mean that persons are particular substances because Locke doesn’t use these terms to refer to substances alone: Locke refers to modes as “things” or “beings” on more than one occasion in the *Essay* (see, for instance, Book II, Ch. XXV, §6; Book III, Ch. V, §5). We therefore need to see whether there are any additional reasons to think Lockean persons are modes.

⁸⁹ “’Tis not therefore Unity of Substance that comprehends all sorts of *Identity*, or will determine it in every Case: But to conceive, and judge of it aright, we must consider what *Idea* the Word it is applied to stands for” (§7, 23–26).

⁹⁰ “This being premised to find wherein *personal Identity* consists, we must consider what *Person* stands for” (§9, 9–10).

C. Reasons to Think Persons Are Modes?

As we saw in the last chapter, Locke claims that when we make ideas of particular substances, our intention is to represent what's in the world. We create our ideas of particular substances after observing qualities constantly together and assume that these qualities are supported by substratum. When we make ideas of modes, we are up to something quite different. When we make ideas of modes, we put simple ideas together as we see fit (Book III, Ch. XI, §18). We don't assume there is an entity in the world that persists with any steadiness which we aim to represent and we certainly don't assume there is something like substratum holding the simple ideas we combine together.

I would argue that when we make and name the idea we call "person" we don't put together scattered and independent ideas as we see fit. We aim to represent actual beings that subsist in the world—like ourselves. This makes it look like "person" marks an idea of a substance, rather than a mode. It's also worth noting that it seems strange to ask whether murder y at time 2 is the same murder as x at time 1, or whether the gratitude someone expressed to me today is the same as the gratitude⁹¹ expressed to me several years ago,⁹² yet one of the most important and fundamental questions we ask about persons is whether y at time 2 is the same as x at time 1. This is something we consistently ask or assume not only with regard to others but also ourselves. I contend this shows that while we don't think modes like murders or expressions

⁹¹ As we saw in the last chapter, the ideas we call "murder" and "gratitude" are archetypal mode ideas for Locke.

⁹² The same goes even for more thing-like modes such as rainbows. The same also goes for things like parades or dances (which are also modes for Locke). It seems that rainbows, parades and dances persist, but we take them to be rather fleeting—like all other events. Moreover, when I ask whether y is the same parade as x was last year, what I'm asking is whether y and x are of the same kind. Likewise, when I ask whether y is the same dance as the one performed last week, it seems I am wondering whether it is of the same kind (i.e., a tango). The question then is not whether we have numerically the same thing over time, but whether we have a thing of the same kind as in the past. These are different questions, and it appears we are asking the former about persons, though the latter about modes like parades and dances.

of gratitude persist with any steadiness, we think persons do.⁹³ This, coupled with the claims that Locke makes about substance and power, make it look like the idea we call “person” better aligns with Locke’s conception of “substance” than “mode.”⁹⁴

That being said, Antonia LoLordo comes to the opposite conclusion. After giving a treatment of Locke on “substance” and “mode” that is very similar to the one I gave in the last chapter, LoLordo claims that the idea we call “person” better aligns with Locke’s conception of “mode” than “substance.” In what follows I will outline the considerations LoLordo offers in favor of this claim and evaluate each of them in turn.

LoLordo claims that because modes depend on substances, and the examples Locke gives in his discussion of personal identity never depict consciousness subsisting without a substance, this means persons depend for their subsistence on substances and are thus more like modes than substances (LoLordo, 651–652). What LoLordo is assuming when she makes this claim is that persons just are consciousnesses. A Lockean person is not just a consciousness, however. A Lockean person is a thing with consciousness. Thus, while LoLordo is right to think that the consciousness of any person is dependent upon a substance, it could be the case that the substance upon which any person’s consciousness depends is the person herself. It’s also the case that Locke claims the life of any plant or animal is dependent upon substance, and this

⁹³ This of course doesn’t rule out cases of dissociative identity disorder, dementia and the like. But it’s important that we call such cases “disorders” and treat them as far from the norm. A key component of Locke’s definition of “person” is that persons are the kinds of entities that can consider themselves as themselves in different times and places. To me, this means not only that persons are the kinds of entities that persist over time but also the kinds of entities that are self-aware of such persistence (in most or “normal” cases).

⁹⁴ This point about power is one I will return to at length later in the chapter.

doesn't make plants or animals modes, so there is little reason to come to this kind of conclusion when it comes to persons.⁹⁵

LoLordo goes on to claim that ideas of substances have as archetypes things in the world, whereas ideas of modes do not. This is why when we want to know whether our idea of a substance is accurate, we look to the world to find out, and we don't do the same with modes (645–647). After explaining this LoLordo claims that the way we look for fit when it comes to “person” better matches what we do with ideas of modes than what we do with ideas of substances. She says, “This criterion is somewhat more troublesome, for it seems that we *do* typically refer our idea of persons to existing things. In fact, we typically refer them to the living animal bodies that surround us—a mistake Locke is concerned to exorcise. But consider how I would react were it to turn out that none of these bodies possessed consciousness. Would I revise my idea of a person to better fit the things it is referred to, thus omitting consciousness from the idea of a person? I think not. Rather, I would conclude that there were no persons (save myself) and modify my behavior towards the living bodies around me accordingly” (LoLordo, 652).

As I said earlier, we do tend to think persons are entities that exist in the world. This is the case even after we move past the confusion we might initially have regarding “persons” and “men” or “human beings,” and this does point to persons being more like substances than modes. In addition, it seems like the case that LoLordo offers regarding the direction of fit in the section of the text just quoted is the wrong sort of case. The kind of case we need is not one in which we look into the world and find that there are no persons, but the kind in which we look into the

⁹⁵ At one point, LoLordo (2010) claims, “I am not sure it follows from the fact that oaks are paradigm substances that there are no good reasons to count them as modes” (pp. 654–655). Thus, this objection might not really move her. Nevertheless, I'm not at all sure what to make of this statement, and think that the objection should: If Locke tells us that *x* is a particular substance explicitly, we ought to take his word for it. Otherwise, the business of interpretation (and especially charitable interpretation) becomes an almost impossible one. Moreover, later in the paper, LoLordo is committed to the claim that Lockean plants and animals are particular substances. So, this objection should move her.

world and learn something new about persons.⁹⁶ If, given that new information, we don't change our conception of persons, then it looks like we have *some* evidence that the idea we call "person" better aligns with how Locke thinks of ideas of modes, than ideas of substances.⁹⁷

LoLordo hasn't offered such a case, however, and it looks like the study of consciousness and psychology suggest otherwise (though, of course, this wasn't something on Locke's radar). The contrast in direction of fit thus doesn't suggest that persons are modes, as LoLordo thinks it does.

As we now well know, our ideas of substances contain the idea of substratum, but our ideas of modes do not (648). LoLordo points this out and then argues that substratum wouldn't get switched out like it does in many of the cases or thought experiments that Locke gives in the "Identity and Diversity" chapter if substratum were essential to our idea of "person"—making it look like persons are not substances, but modes.

LoLordo is right to claim that an essential component of our ideas of particular substances is the idea we call "substratum." I don't think that this, coupled with the fact that Locke gives stories of persons persisting despite a change in substrata, or persons failing to persist despite no such change, points to persons being modes, however. On the contrary, I

⁹⁶ This is because if we look at Book III, Ch. VI, §44–51, where Locke discusses the way Adam makes, names and fine tunes his ideas of modes and substances, it becomes clear that this is what he has in mind when he discusses what LoLordo calls "direction of fit." Also, while it's certainly true that we wouldn't alter an idea of a mode just because we looked into the world and didn't find anything that corresponds to it, we don't always alter our ideas of substance in light of this information either. In other words, we don't always alter or get rid of fantastical substance ideas when we realize there is no corresponding entity in the world. (Think of our ideas of unicorns and Santa Clause, for instance.) This is rare, as our intention when we make any idea of a substance is to map onto what's in the world, but I think it's at worth noting that the situation is not as clear cut as LoLordo makes it. It's also worth pointing out that what seems to matter most regarding direction of fit is *where we look*, and I contend it's quite clear that we look to the world, rather than other language users, when it comes to the idea we call "person"—given the study of consciousness, psychology and the like. This points to persons being substances, rather than modes.

⁹⁷ I say we have *some* indication because the direction of fit doesn't give us certainty with regard to whether an idea is an idea of a substance or mode. In addition, it's worth noting that if scientists found out some new feature of gold, it may be the case that my idea of "gold" (or the nominal essence I have created for the kind we call "gold") could remain unchanged. Perhaps that new detail wouldn't matter to me, given my purposes. This is something to keep in mind.

would think it strange that Locke would say (or even intimate) anything about a change in substratum,⁹⁸ if persons were modes because Locke never says anything about the qualities of modes being dependent upon substratum for their subsistence.⁹⁹ I thus think the examples Locke gives—if and when they include a change in substratum¹⁰⁰—actually point toward Lockean persons being particular substances, rather than modes.

Finally, LoLordo claims that Locke thinks substances have mind independent unity, but modes get their unity from the understanding (648). Like Winkler, LoLordo thinks that Lockean “persons are constituted by appropriative mental acts” (653) and this causes LoLordo to conclude that the unity of persons is mind dependent—making persons look more like modes than substances.

It’s important to realize that when Locke talks about the unity of modes, he’s talking about the unity of our *ideas* of modes. (The understanding is the glue that holds the simple ideas that constitute the complex ideas we call “modes” together.¹⁰¹ It is the internal constitution and substratum of the thing that any given idea represents that does this work, when it comes to particular substances, however.¹⁰²) Thus, whether persons—in the world—are constituted by appropriative mental acts doesn’t much matter when it comes to determining whether persons are particular substances or modes.¹⁰³ Even if persons are constituted by appropriative mental acts,

⁹⁸ Or lack thereof.

⁹⁹ In fact, Locke never mentions “substratum” when discussing modes at all—unless it’s to say that our ideas of modes don’t contain the idea we call “substratum” like our ideas of particular substances do.

¹⁰⁰ Or lack thereof.

¹⁰¹ “Every *mixed Mode* consisting of many distinct simple *Ideas*, it seems reasonable to enquire, *whence it has its Unity*; and how such a precise multitude comes to make but one *Idea*, since that Combination does not always exist together in Nature. To which I answer it is plain, it has its Unity from an Act of the Mind combining those several simple *Ideas* together, and considering them as one complex one, consisting of those parts” (Book II, Ch. XXII, §4; see also Book III, Ch. V, §10).

¹⁰² Though this of course entails that the internal constitution and substratum of any particular subsistent thing also holds the qualities or powers that cause any simple ideas in us together too.

¹⁰³ Though as shown below, that thinking is a power is important, and points to persons being substances.

this doesn't mean that the thing that holds the simple ideas that constitute the complex idea we call "person" together is the understanding, and it's only if this is the case that we have evidence that the idea we call "person" marks an idea of a mode.¹⁰⁴

After thinking about the idea we call "person" in light of what Locke says about how we make and name ideas of substances and modes, it looks like we have little reason to think persons are modes, even if doing so would resolve the apparent tension we started with. That being said, some of what Locke says regarding our conceptions of "substance" and "mode" is a bit unclear and it's worth considering whether there are other reasons to think that Lockean persons are modes.

Antonia LoLordo offers three: LoLordo argues that 1) the way Locke proceeds in the "Identity and Diversity" chapter only makes sense if persons are modes, 2) it's only if persons are modes that what Locke says about the identity of persons doesn't clash with his anti-essentialism and 3) Locke's claims about morality point to persons being modes. I will say something brief about the first two considerations and then turn to a lengthy treatment of the third.¹⁰⁵

When LoLordo claims that the way Locke proceeds in the "Identity and Diversity" chapter only makes sense if persons are modes, her point is twofold: To start, she thinks it's

¹⁰⁴ While LoLordo (2010) points to Ken Winkler as an ally when it comes to the point about persons being constituted by appropriative mental acts, Winkler (1991) thinks persons are substances and not modes. I point this out not because it would be new information for LoLordo, but just to say that it is possible to think that persons are constituted by appropriative mental acts and think that persons are substances—as Winkler does. Finally, if persons are constituted by appropriative mental acts, then persons can think. This is important to note because, as we will see below, there is good reason to conclude that if persons have the power to think (or any other powers), then persons have to be particular substances for Locke (as I intimated in the previous footnote).

¹⁰⁵ I take these slightly out of order. What I'm calling "3" is really the second argument LoLordo gives and vice versa. I do this because LoLordo's claims about morality are ones she shares with Mattern and constitute the best reasons to think persons might be modes (something that LoLordo herself claims as well). This order allows me to give the claims LoLordo and Mattern make about the possibility of a demonstrative science of ethics the space and consideration they deserve.

significant that Locke uses so many thought experiments in his discussion of persons and yet fails to use such experiments elsewhere. She thinks this suggests that persons are modes. In addition, she thinks that if Locke's claims about the persistence of persons are not only true, but also meaningful, persons have to be modes.¹⁰⁶

I contend, however, that since our finite understandings leave us in a state of ignorance about substances, Locke's use of thought experiments could suggest that persons are particular substances. We don't know what any particular substance's substratum is like. We also don't know whether the substratum that supports material qualities also supports immaterial qualities, and we don't know what any particular substance's real essence is like. Perhaps it is because of this that Locke has to come up with so many scenarios to show that it is not sameness of substance that makes for sameness of person. In other words, there are so many different scenarios that could lead to the same man acting like a different person (change in consciousness alone, change in consciousness due to a change in soul, etc.) and we can't know which one is in play in "real life" cases, so Locke has to stipulate—as one only can through a thought experiment. The discussion of the persistence of other kinds of particular substances doesn't present this challenge because there are fewer unknown factors in play. This is why Locke relies on actual cases for those entities.

It's also the case that if the claims Locke makes about persons are not only true, but also meaningful, only if persons are modes, then this has to be the case for the other entities Locke

¹⁰⁶ This is because (given our finite natures) universal affirmative claims about particular substances are either true by definition (the predicate class is contained in the subject class) or less than certain (because we can't be in contact with every member of any substance kind and we can know so little about substances in general; Book IV, Ch. VIII, §9). Mattern makes a similar claim, but with regard to the propositions of a demonstrative science of ethics. What I say in the sections below re: "person" needing to be a mode idea to render the science of ethics demonstrable can also be applied to the point about the propositions being meaningful. (Even if *most* of the terms need to be mode terms for the propositions of ethics to be meaningful, this need not mean "person" is a mode term. Hopefully what I say below will make clear as to why I think this is the case.)

discusses in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter as well, and we have ample evidence that these other entities (atoms, plants, animals, etc.) are substances for Locke. It thus doesn’t look like the first argument LoLordo gives points to Lockean persons being modes.¹⁰⁷

We will now consider the claims LoLordo makes about Locke’s anti-essentialism.

LoLordo notes that Michael Ayers and Dan Kaufman have argued that the claims Locke makes about persons are incompatible with his anti-essentialism. Locke appears to give a realist account of personal identity though he is a nominalist when it comes to kinds. LoLordo claims that this tension dissolves if persons are modes, however.

I have to admit that I just don’t see how what Locke says in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter is incompatible with his nominalism. When Locke claims that we must first know what “person” stands for, before we can understand what makes any person the same over time, what he does is get clear on what the nominal essence of the kind “person” is. Then when Locke uses thought experiments to illustrate that it is sameness of consciousness, not sameness of substance, that makes for sameness of person, what he does is devise scenarios that require us to think about the nominal essence of the kind we call “person” and consider whether a person could persist through the change described. Nowhere in his discussion of identity does Locke claim that we need to know anything about the real essence of the things we are tracking, nor does he claim

¹⁰⁷ It could also be that what Locke aims to give us in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter is not universal claims about which he thinks he has certain knowledge, but something closer to probability. When it comes to persons it surely seems like this is the case, for why would Locke remind us that God will have it figured out in the end, otherwise? I suggest this points to persons being substances, rather than modes. (Note: I know LoLordo claims this isn’t what Locke is after, because he uses so many thought experiments and probability comes from “First, the conformity of any thing with our own knowledge, observation, and experience. Second, the testimony of others, vouching their observation and experience” (LoLordo, 2010, p. 661; Book IV, Ch. XV, §4) but as I mentioned above there is good reason for Locke to use thought experiments and not merely our own observations or the observations of others. There are just so many things we can’t discern about persons, and as I suggest above, this points to persons being substances, rather than modes.) It also contend that what Locke says in Book IV, Ch. VI makes it look like certain knowledge couldn’t be what Locke was striving for in his discussion of the persistence of plants and animals, and I think this might be telling.

that real essences inform how we carve up the world.¹⁰⁸ It's therefore not only the case that I'm not sure how persons being modes could help Locke get out of the tension Ayers and Kaufman highlight; it's also the case that I don't see the force of the problem to begin with.¹⁰⁹

With this in mind I think we should move on to the claims LoLordo makes about persons and morality.¹¹⁰ Both LoLordo and Ruth Mattern think that what Locke says about morality, and the possibility of a demonstrative science of ethics commits him to thinking that the idea we call "person" marks an idea of a mode. In what follows, we will see why.

Mattern and LoLordo argue that because Locke thinks a demonstrative science of ethics is possible, and we can only have a demonstrative science of anything where the laws are couched in terms of modes, and "person" is a central moral term for Locke,¹¹¹ we should conclude that Lockean persons are modes. If we think back to what we learned in the last chapter, it's easy to see why Locke would think we can only have a demonstrative science of anything where the laws are couched in terms of modes; and this is because to have a demonstrative science of anything the terms of that science need to be terms that we know perfectly or adequately, and our only adequate ideas are ideas of modes.¹¹²

I suggested in the previous chapter that Locke thinks a demonstrative science of ethics is possible. In Book III, Ch. XI, §16¹¹³ we get evidence that this is the case. We moreover get

¹⁰⁸ Nor does Locke claim that the nominal essence he gives for "person" is the only possible essence for that (or any other) kind.

¹⁰⁹ It's also worth noting—as LoLordo does—that this is a problem for plants and animals too (if it is a problem at all).

¹¹⁰ This is her second argument as she lays it out. I just deal with it last for dialectic reasons here.

¹¹¹ Mattern doesn't directly claim that "person" is a "central moral term for Locke." This is something LoLordo claims, though it looks like Mattern would accept such a claim, given what she says about the "moral man," etc.

¹¹² Though one could say our ideas of relations are adequate. I think this is worth thinking about.

¹¹³ Where Locke claims, "Upon this ground it is, that I am bold to think, that *Morality is capable of Demonstration*, as well as *Mathematicks*: Since the precise real Essence of the Things moral Words stand for, may be perfectly known; and so the Congruity, or Incongruity of the Things themselves, be certainly discovered, in which consists perfect Knowledge"

evidence that this is because we know the real essence of moral terms. As we have seen, we can only know the real essence of modes. It's also worth noting that in Book II, Ch. XXVII, Locke calls "person" a "forensic term." Persons therefore may indeed have something to do with morality; and, it at first seems like Mattern and LoLordo might be right when they conclude that persons are modes for Locke as a result.

At this point I should add that both Mattern and LoLordo take the name "person" and the name "moral man" to stand for the same idea, which picks out the same objects in the world.¹¹⁴ Thus, what Locke says about the "moral man" has implications for persons. If we read on in Book III, Ch. XI, §16 with this in mind, it looks like we get further evidence that the moral man—and therefore persons—are modes:

When we say that *Man is subject to Law*: We mean nothing by *Man*, but a corporeal rational Creature: What the real Essence or other Qualities of that Creature are in this Case, is no way considered. And therefore, whether a Child or Changeling be a *Man* in a physical Sense, may amongst the Naturalists be as disputable as it will, it concerns not at all the *moral Man*, as I may call him, which is this immoveable unchangeable *Idea, a corporeal rational Being*. For were there a Monkey, or any other Creature to be found, that had the use of Reason, to such a degree, as to be able to understand general Signs, and to deduce Consequences about general *Ideas*, he would no doubt be subject to Law, and, in that Sense, be a *Man*, how much soever he differ'd in Shape from others of that Name.

I take it that the above text looks like it's evidential for the moral man, and therefore persons, being modes because it's usually the case that our ideas of particular substances are affected by what the naturalists discover in the world, though it's not usually the case that our ideas of modes are affected by such discoveries. When Locke says that the idea that we call the "moral man" is an immoveable, unchangeable idea, that is unaffected by what the naturalists uncover or claim, it

¹¹⁴ Margaret Atherton thinks that Mattern and LoLordo are wrong about this, because a moral man is a corporeal rational creature/a kind of man, and a person is neither a man nor corporeal (Email exchange, May 31, 2012). I am going to assume that Mattern and LoLordo are right for argument's sake and go from there.

therefore looks like Locke is saying that the idea we call “moral man” is an idea of a mode, rather than that of a substance.

Nevertheless, if we read on, it looks like what Locke is actually claiming is far different from this:

Nor let any one object, that the names of Substances are often to be made use of in Morality, as well as those of Modes, from which will arise Obscurity. For as to Substances, when concerned in moral Discourses, their divers Natures are not so much enquir'd into, as supposed; v.g. when we say that *Man is subject to Law*: We mean nothing by *Man*, but a corporeal rational Creature: What the real Essence or other Qualities of that Creature are in this Case, is no way considered. And therefore, whether a Child or Changeling be a *Man* in a physical Sense, may amongst the Naturalists be as disputable as it will, it concerns not at all the *moral Man*, as I may call him, which is this immoveable unchangeable *Idea, a corporeal rational Being*. For were there a Monkey, or any other Creature to be found, that had the use of Reason, to such a degree, as to be able to understand general Signs, and to deduce Consequences about general *Ideas*, he would no doubt be subject to Law, and, in that Sense, be a *Man*, how much soever he differ'd in Shape from others of that Name. The Names of Substances, if they be used in them, as they should, can no more disturb Moral, than they do Mathematical Discourses: Where, if the Mathematicians speak of a *Cube* or *Globe* of *Gold*, or any other Body, he has his clear settled *Idea*, which varies not, though it may, by mistake, be applied to a particular Body, to which it belongs not (Book III, Ch. XI, §16).

A careful reading of Book III, Ch. XI, §16 shows that what Locke is really claiming is that every term in a demonstrative science of ethics need not mark an idea of a mode, just like every term in a demonstrative science of mathematics need not mark an idea of a mode. Moral laws can contain names of substances, just like mathematical ones can, and even though this is the case, it doesn't mean that demonstration is rendered impossible. This is because when we use the name of any substance in what is supposed to be a demonstrative science, we don't focus on the fact that we don't know the real essence of the thing to which that named idea refers, or even a good number of its qualities. This is because the thing to which that named idea refers is not the focus of our science.

In other words, we are not concerned with ideas of particular substances or particular substances themselves, and what we do and don't know about them in any demonstrative science—whether it be ethics or mathematics. This is what Locke means when he says, “The Names of Substances, if they be used in them, as they should, can no more disturb Moral, than they do Mathematical Discourses: Where, if the Mathematicians speak of a *Cube* or *Globe* of *Gold*, or any other Body, he has his clear settled *Idea*, which varies not, though it may, by mistake, be applied to a particular Body, to which it belongs not (Book III, Ch. XI, §16). While gold is the substance to which Locke turns to make this point when it comes to mathematics, the moral man is the substance to which Locke turns to make the analogous point about ethics, and this is made clear in the language above.¹¹⁵

So, while what qualities or details we include in our ideas of the moral man and gold would usually be affected by what the naturalists discover, given that they're ideas of particular substances, such a thing is not a concern when we create, utilize and discuss ethical or mathematical laws—where said ideas sometimes appear. This is because when we create, utilize and discuss ethical laws we are concerned not with ideas of substances like the ones we call “man” or “moral man,” but with ideas of modes, like the ideas we call “justice” or “murder.” When we create, utilize, and discuss mathematical laws, we are concerned not with ideas of substances like the ones we call “gold” or “iron,” but with ideas of modes, like the ideas we call “triangle” or “cube.” Ideas of substances are thus like placeholders in demonstrative sciences. We sometimes need them to express that which we desire, but their nature, or the nature of their referents is not the subject of our enquiry.

¹¹⁵ I think we get further evidence that this is what Locke means if we look to Book IV, Ch. VI, §4 and Book IV, Ch. XII, §9.

This is why Locke claims that even though moral discourse includes names of substances, and therefore ideas of substances, the meaning of them is set. “Moral man” stands for an idea of a corporeal rational creature, for the purposes of moral discourse, just like “gold” stands for an idea of a shiny, yellow metal, for the purposes of mathematical discourse—despite what the latest discoveries might tell us and the fact that our ideas of particular substances are usually informed by such discoveries. Moreover, this is all Locke means when he says: “What the real Essence or other Qualities of that Creature are in this Case, is no way considered” (Bk. III, Ch. XI, §16). Therefore, although this kind of claim at first looks like its evidential for the moral man—and thus persons—being modes, when we read this claim in context, as we have just done, we see that this is not the case.

What we get out of this passage then is direct evidence that Locke thinks the idea we call “moral man” marks an idea of a substance, and indirect evidence that Locke thinks the idea we call “person” marks an idea of a substance, as a result. Winkler looks at this same passage—Book III, Ch. XI, §16—and claims that it shows that the moral man is a substance for Locke. In response to this objection, LoLordo says that she grants that the name “moral man” is the name of a substance, but this doesn’t mean that the idea which this name stands for is an idea of a substance, or that this idea’s referent is a particular substance in the world (655).

Given that we have never seen Locke employing names of substances to stand for anything other than ideas of substances, and substances in the world, it looks like once LoLordo accepts that the name “moral man” is the name of a substance, she has to also accept that this marks an idea of a substance, or that moral men are indeed substances. In addition, we should note that LoLordo herself claims, “if the moral man is a substance so is a person” (655). I thus looks like we not only have good reason to think that Locke thinks the moral man is a substance.

It also looks like LoLordo has good reason to accept that persons are substances, in light of this fact.¹¹⁶

At this point Mattern and LoLordo would likely argue that there is direct evidence for “person” being at the center of a demonstrative science of ethics, and persons being modes, as a result. This comes in Book IV, Ch. III, §18. Here Locke claims:

The *Idea* of a supreme Being, infinite in Power, Goodness, and Wisdom, whose Workmanship we are, and on whom we depend; and the *Idea* of our selves, as understanding, rational Beings, being such as are clear in us, would, I suppose, if duly considered, and pursued, afford such Foundations of our Duty and Rules of Action, as might place *Morality amongst the Sciences capable of Demonstration*: wherein I doubt not, but from self-evident Propositions, by necessary Consequences, as incontestable as those in Mathematicks, the measures of right and wrong be made out, to any one that will apply himself with the same Indifferency and Attention to the one, as he does to the other of these Sciences. The *Relation* of other Modes may be certainly perceived, as well as those of Number and Extension: and I cannot see, why they should not also be capable of Demonstration, if due Methods were thought on to examine, or pursue their Agreement or Disagreement. *Where there is no Property, there is no Injustice*, is a Proposition as certain as any Demonstration in *Euclid*: For the *Idea* of *Property*, being a right to any thing; and the *Idea* to which the name *Injustice* is given, being the invasion or Violation of that right; it is evident, that these *Ideas* being thus established, and these Names annexed to them, I can as certainly know this Proposition to be true, as that a Triangle has three Angles equal to two right ones. Again, *No Government allows absolute Liberty*: The *Idea* of Government being the establishment of Society upon certain Rules or Laws, which require Conformity to them and the *Idea* of absolute Liberty being for any one to do whatever he pleases; I am as capable of being certain of the Truth of this Proposition, as of any in Mathematicks.¹¹⁷

After quoting this passage herself, LoLordo claims “The idea of ourselves ‘as understanding, rational creatures’: this is the idea of a *person*” (LoLordo, 663). It seems like LoLordo is exactly right about that. Locke is talking about persons, and the idea that each person has of her self. It’s also the case that Locke is once again talking about the possibility of a demonstrative science of ethics here. Locke clearly thinks we can be as certain of the relation

¹¹⁶ Note: although Mattern utilizes the “moral man” passage as evidence for her mode interpretation, LoLordo only responds to the objection raised by Winkler regarding this passage.

¹¹⁷ Mattern and LoLordo both utilize this passage, and LoLordo credits Mattern with highlighting its importance.

between any two ideas of modes in ethics, as we can of the relation between any two ideas of modes in mathematics. But the thing LoLordo takes this passage to also express is that “person” is a moral term that is “central to the demonstrative science of morality.”

It’s not clear what makes a term a moral term for Locke, or what would make some moral terms “central to the demonstrative science of morality” and others not. Locke never uses this kind of language. It is clear, however, that while some terms in any given moral law are the terms the law aims to clarify or say something substantive about, others are not. Moreover, I would think that for a term to be “central” to a science, it need not only be featured in a good number of the laws of that science; it should also be the case that said term is one of the key points of investigation or inquiry of that science. I would therefore think that if the term “person” is “central” to a demonstrative science of ethics, it would not only be the case that the term “person” is featured in a good number of moral laws; it would also be the case that part of what the demonstrative science of ethics attempts to do is get clear on what the term “person” means and where the boundaries of the species we call “person” lies.

Importantly, none of the moral rules that Locke discusses above even include the idea we call “person”—and this becomes clear if we examine his language.¹¹⁸ It’s thus hard to see how what Locke says here commits him to the claim that “person” is a term that is central to a demonstrative science of ethics. It also looks like LoLordo is claiming that because Locke calls the idea we have of ourselves “clear,” then that means that the idea we call “person” is an idea of

¹¹⁸ In addition, it’s not in his discussion of ethics, morality or politics—but his discussion of epistemology and metaphysics—that Locke gets clear on what persons are and where the boundary of the species we call “person” lies, and this seems significant.

mode.¹¹⁹ Our ideas of particular substances can be clear insofar as the simple ideas that comprise them are clear, however,¹²⁰ and, some mode ideas fail to be clear.¹²¹

Moreover, if it's the case that the idea we call "person" is an idea of a mode, because it's clear, then it looks like we have evidence in the passage above for the idea we call "God" being an idea of a mode, as well. This would give us a less than sympathetic reading of Locke, for such a reading would not only make Locke a heretic; it's also inconsistent with the claim that the idea of God is an idea of a substance—a claim that Locke makes on more than one occasion (Book II, Ch. XXI, §2; Book II, Ch. XXIII, §35; Book II, Ch. XXVII, §2).¹²²

What Locke is really saying here is that given that we know we (persons) are the kinds of things to which moral rules apply, and we know there is a God, who will dole out eternal

¹¹⁹ Both Mattern and LoLordo assert that by "clear" Locke means "adequate"—but they give no argument for this assertion, and, as we have seen, Locke makes a distinction between clarity and adequacy: An idea is clear if it is vivid or exact, and we can easily reignite it via the memory, and obscure, if not. (Book II, Ch. XXIX, §2). On the other hand, it's only if a real idea represents its archetype perfectly that it's adequate; it is inadequate if not (Book II, Ch. XXXI, §1). Mattern and LoLordo have given no compelling reasons for us to think that suddenly Locke takes "clear" and "adequate" to mean the same thing, and so I think we ought to continue to assume they do not.

¹²⁰ That being said, the idea of substratum always fails to be clear, under Locke's view.

¹²¹ Locke claims that the ideas we call "infinity" and "eternity" fail to be clear, and we know that both of these are ideas of modes (Book II, Ch. XXIX, §15 and 16).

¹²² LoLordo (2010) notes that the idea of "God" is an idea of a substance, but "God" can be central to a demonstrative science of ethics because we know God's real essence. LoLordo uses Book IV, Ch. X, §12 as evidence: "Locke tells us that God's 'omniscience, power, and providence will be established, and all his other attributes follow' from 'the necessary existence of an eternal mind'" (fn 35, p. 663). She says, "I do not claim to understand how one derives providence from necessary existence. Thus, although Locke does not put it in these words, we have at least partial knowledge of the real essence of God. This explains why the idea of God can enter into demonstrative science while our ideas of created substances cannot" (fn 35, p. 663). It's important to note that Locke does not "put it in these words." He does not claim that we have even partial knowledge of the real essence of God, and all it seems he says in the section of the text LoLordo quotes is that all of God's attributes flow from his real essence (just like with any other substance). Finally, given that Locke thinks we can't know the real essence of finite substances, I find it difficult to believe we would have access to the real essence of God, and Locke says as much: "For it is Infinity, which joined to our *Ideas* of Existence, Power, Knowledge, *etc.* makes that complex *Idea*, whereby we represent to our selves the best we can, the supreme Being ... [H]is own Essence (which certainly we do not know, not knowing the real Essence of a Pebble, or a Fly, or our own selves,)" (Book II, Ch. XXIII, §35). There is implicit reference to a similar point here: "I do not pretend to say how these Attributes are in GOD, who is infinitely beyond the reach of our narrow capacities" (Book II, Ch. XVII, §1).

punishment and reward on Judgment Day, we have good reason to develop a theory of morality. We have good reason to develop human moral laws. It also looks like Locke thinks that we can come just as far with morality as we can with something like mathematics, and this is because the thing that makes mathematics capable of demonstration is a feature of moral rules as well: they are couched *mostly* in mode terms. What we get here, then, is one more push for the possibility of a demonstrative science of ethics, in addition to a story about how or why we developed such rules in the first place. What we don't get, however, is evidence for the claim that "person" is a term that is central to a demonstrative science of ethics, and this means that we don't get evidence for persons being modes, either.

At this point, LoLordo could argue that because Locke claims the idea we have of ourselves (as persons) and the idea we have of God provide the foundation for a demonstrative science of ethics as I just described, then the idea we call "person" has to be a central moral term. But it seems as if there is a difference between a term or idea being foundational and a term or idea being central. Moreover, if this is the case for persons, then LoLordo has to accept that the term "God" is a central moral term as well. This would mean that the name "God" would have to mark the idea of a mode, for Locke—and this would indeed be troubling, for the reasons I just described. Thus, what Locke says in Book IV, Ch. III, §18 doesn't give us evidence that the term "person" is central to a demonstrative science of ethics.

Still, LoLordo might claim that I have taken what it means for a term to be central to a demonstrative science to be something different than what she had in mind, or claim that even if "person" isn't a term that is central to a demonstrative science of ethics, this doesn't much matter. This is because in Book III, Ch. XI, §16, Locke claims that we know "the precise Essence of the Things moral Words stand for" and this means that any moral term, whether central or not, must mark an idea of a mode. Moreover, "person" is a moral term for Locke.

I would respond by saying that if we want to claim that “person” is a moral term for Locke because persons are the entities that we hold responsible for action, and punish and reward accordingly—or, in other words, persons are the entities to which moral laws apply—that is just fine. Locke calls person a “forensic term,” and I take this to mean just that. But it seems that when we say that we have to know the real essences of moral terms for a demonstrative science of ethics to be possible, what we mean is that we need to know the precise nature and bounds of the species of the terms that comprise the substantive parts of the laws of ethics (like “justice,” “murder,” “property,” etc.) in order to get demonstrative knowledge, not the real essence of the entities to which said laws apply. It looks like this is, at least in part, what Locke is saying in Book III, Ch. XI, §16.¹²³

¹²³ Moreover, just because an entity is a thing to which laws or a theory applies, this does not have to mean that the term that picks out that entity is a term of that theory or science. For instance, we apply aesthetic norms to all sorts of objects—landscapes, sunsets, architecture, etc.—but when pressed, we wouldn’t likely say that “landscape,” “sunset,” or “architecture” are aesthetic terms. In the same vein, we often apply the laws of physics to help explain the world around us. This is how we explain why a piece of chalk will necessarily fall to the earth when released from a hand—but when pressed, we wouldn’t likely say that “chalk” or “earth” are terms of physics (or at least in the way that, say, “gravity” is). Perhaps Locke is saying something similar in Book III, Ch. XI, §16, when it looks like he denies that the “moral man” is a moral term. And maybe this means that to be considered a term of a science or theory requires a lot more than just being sometimes featured in the laws of that science or theory, or being a term that picks out the entities to which said laws apply. Maybe, that is, for a term to be a term of a science or theory at all, it needs to be central (in the way I describe above)? Ed McCann has suggested (Locke Workshop, University of St. Andrews) that “force” only appears once in Newton’s laws, though it is indeed a term that is central to his theory, and so the number of times “person” appears in the laws of ethics might not determine whether “person” is a moral term, or a central moral term. I take it that McCann is right about this, but it seems that while Newton was trying to get clear on forces and their effects, the laws of ethics don’t try to do the same when it comes to persons, so the point remains.

On a slightly different note, Ruth Boeker has argued (Locke Workshop, University of St. Andrews, June 2012) that persons are not just the objects of the laws of morality, but the *subjects*, insofar as they can reason and reflect, etc. As we will see below, I would just take this as further evidence for a non-mode reading of Lockean persons. Also, if the point is that what’s required for demonstration of morality is that we (persons) are the kinds of entities that can complete the demonstration, insofar as we have reason, etc. this is not something specific to the science of morality. The demonstrative science of mathematics requires this too, yet we wouldn’t say that “person” is a term that is central to that science.

I therefore don't think that just because Locke calls "person" a "forensic term," this entails that "person" is a "moral term,"—unless all we mean by that is that persons are the objects to which moral laws apply. And, if this is all we mean when we claim that "person" is a "moral term," I don't take it that we have to think that persons are modes as a result.

In fact, if we look at Locke's claims about "person" being a "forensic term," in light of what Locke says about substance and agency in other parts of the *Essay*, we get evidence to the contrary. When Locke calls "person" a forensic term, it looks like what he is claiming is what I have just intimated above: that persons are the kinds of entities that act, and are held accountable for their actions. In other words, persons are agents.

If this is the case, then it looks like persons had better be entities that actually exist in the world with some steadiness. Otherwise, how would punishment and reward work? What would it amount to? This seems to suggest that persons are substances, rather than modes.

Locke goes on to say as much. As we saw in the previous chapter, Locke claims that *only* substances can be agents (Book II, Ch. XXI, §16).¹²⁴ If persons are agents and only substances can be agents it looks like persons have to be substances. Thus, when Locke calls "person" a "forensic term" we actually get evidence for persons being particular substances. So, while it is important to consider what Locke says about the possibility of a demonstrative science of ethics, and "person" being a forensic term, what we learn as a result of this examination doesn't point us in the direction of a mode reading of Locke on persons, as Mattern and LoLordo claim.

Moreover, if we further consider Locke's definition of "person" in light of what Locke says about substance and power in other parts of the *Essay*, we have compelling evidence for persons being particular substances. As we know, Locke claims "*Person* stands for ... a thinking

¹²⁴ Note: As I mentioned in the last chapter, I take it what Locke says here commits him to the claim that in order for an entity to be an agent, it must be a substance, though this does not entail that all substances are agents.

intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places” (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §9). This means that the referent of the idea we call “person” is the kind of thing that can think, can reason, and can reflect. In addition, it’s the kind of thing that can self-reflect. Finally, the referent of the idea we call “person” persists over time, and is aware of said persistence.

If a thing has the ability to think, to reason, and to reflect or self-reflect, that thing has powers. We know this because of Locke’s treatment of powers, in general, and because Locke explicitly claims that thinking is a power (and reasoning, reflecting and the like are all just kinds of thinking) (Book II, Ch. XXI, §6). Locke also explicitly claims that persons are the kinds of things that have powers (Book II, Ch. XXI, §10).¹²⁵ So, it’s more than safe to conclude that

¹²⁵ “So that *Liberty is not an Idea belonging to Volition*, or preferring; but to the Person having the Power of doing, or forbearing to do” (Book II, Ch. XXI, §10). In response to this claim, Rickless has objected (though he is on the same side of the substance/mode debate) that when Locke uses the term “person” here he is invoking the ordinary usage of the term and means to say “man.” Rickless thinks this is likely given how much the discussion of Book II, Ch. XXI is focused on the powers of man, and thus we might not have *explicit* evidence that Locke thinks persons have powers. One way to respond is to claim that because Locke hasn’t fully established the distinction he makes between “man” and “person” by Book II, Ch. XXI—as this is something he does in Book II, Ch. XXVII (though there are seeds of it in Book II, Ch. I), whatever Locke says in Book II, Ch. XXI is going to involve some slippage in terms. Thus, while Rickless takes Locke to mean “man” by “person” in this section of the text, I could take Locke to mean “person” by “man” here, and there is really no way of knowing which reading is preferred. As Rickless himself points out, however, Locke begins to elucidate the distinction he makes between “man” and “person” in Book II, Ch. I (§11–12 and 19) and Locke works on Book II, Ch. XXI, after adding the “Identity and Diversity” Chapter to the *Essay*. This causes Rickless to claim that when Locke uses the term “man” in Book II, Ch. XXI, we should think he means “man.” If we are going to take Locke at his word and think that by “man” Locke means “man” I think we should do the same when it comes to “person,” however. It seems to me that when Locke makes a claim about persons in Book II, Ch. XXI, he knows full well that there is a distinction between “person” and “man” in play. We thus should think that if Locke meant to say “man” he would use the term “man” and not “person” and vice versa. My point is not that every claim Locke makes in Book II, Ch. XXI is a claim about the powers of persons, but we should take Locke at his word when he claims that persons have powers. It’s also worth noting that implicit in Rickless’s objection is the assumption that Locke is invoking the “ordinary sense” of the term “person” (which really stands for the idea we should call “man.”) I don’t think, however, that we should ever take Locke to invoke this meaning of “person” after he has makes the distinction he does between “man” and “person.” That is, I think that Locke thinks we mistakenly use the term “person” to stand for the idea we should call “man” but this is not a mistake we should think Locke perpetuates in his own writing—though Rickless does (and Strawson seems to as well). Locke’s usage of “person” in section 10 of Book II, Ch. XXI might be purposeful. It

persons have powers. More importantly, we will recall that Locke claims only substances are the kinds of things that have powers. He says, “For who is it that sees not, that *Powers ... are Attributes only of Substances*” (Book II, Ch. XXI, §16).¹²⁶ We can thus say that persons have powers and only substances have powers. So persons have to be substances.¹²⁷

At this point, one who thinks Lockean persons are modes might claim that modes always depend on substances for their existence and inherit some of their properties from substances. These properties include powers. Thus, persons can have powers and still be modes.¹²⁸

In response, I will start by saying that while it is true that Locke claims modes depend on particular substances for their subsistence, it’s not clear what Locke means by this. He doesn’t

might be that it’s when it appears an entity has certain active powers that we know we don’t just have a man, but also a person there. This might be part of what Locke is expressing in some sections of Book II, Ch. XXI, but this is something I need to think about further.

It *is* worth thinking about whether anything hinges on the fact that Locke calls “man” an “agent” in this section of his text. After all, I have claimed that one of the reasons we should think persons are particular substances is because they are agents. But I take it that men being agents doesn’t mean that persons can’t be agents. I also think that they are agents in different senses. A man might be an agent in the sense that he might plan to move toward food when hungry, for instance, as an animal might. But a person might be an agent in the more moral sense. This is why we don’t hold men (who aren’t persons) and animals morally accountable for their actions (though they might be agents in a more trivial sense) while we do hold persons so accountable.

I am skirting the line in my reading then between claiming that those who hold mode readings of Locke on persons over-privilege the sense in which persons are moral, and claiming that persons are of course beings we hold morally accountable for their actions.

¹²⁶ There are scattered claims throughout the chapter in which Locke refers to the power of substances and collectively this becomes compelling. See especially the end of Book II, Ch. XXI.

¹²⁷ Vere Chappell (1990, pp. 19-32) makes a similar argument. Chappell doesn’t make the point that Locke explicitly claims persons have powers, or the point that powers can’t be reified, however (and these are two very important bits of evidence in favor of a substance reading/against any mode interpretation). I used to make the point about powers not being reified earlier in the dialectic but now include it in the section that follows to include Uzgalis’s objections. In addition, Chappell takes Locke to think that persons are compounded substances for Locke, when I think there is no such evidence (as we will see in the next chapter).

¹²⁸ This objection comes from William Uzgalis. This is just one of the objections Uzgalis raises in response to what I have said here. These objections were raised at the 2012 Central Meeting of the APA in a Symposium Session. In the paper to which Uzgalis responds, I claim from the beginning that powers can’t be reified. This wasn’t convincing for him, however, and he pushed on and made this objection, so for exegetical purposes I save the point that powers aren’t reified for Locke until now, and take this as an opportunity to expand upon it as I did in the response I gave to Uzgalis at the APA.

spell it out. As I explained in the last chapter, here is what I think he means: We can have and name the ideas we call “gratitude” and “murder” without meaning to represent anything in the world. However, if we are ever to see that which looks like it matches up with the ideas we call “gratitude” and “murder,”—in the world—it would be because a thinking substance expressed thankfulness, or one thinking substance killed an innocent one. In other words, there is no gratitude without a substance doing the thanking, and there is no murder, without a substance doing the murdering. Likewise, no matter how clear our idea of a triangle is, most of us take it that triangles don’t actually exist, unless substances are configured in a triangular way.

Locke doesn’t claim that modes inherit some of their properties from the substances on which they depend. Nor does he claim that this sharing can include powers. What he does claim is the following: Substances have powers. We get our ideas of active and passive powers from substances in the world (Book II, Ch. XXI, §2) and, thus, powers make up a great part of our ideas of substances (Book II, Ch. XXI, §2; see also Book II, Ch. XXI, §3; Book II, Ch. XXI, §16; Book II, Ch. XXI, §72; Book II, Ch. XXII, §11; Book II, Ch. XXIII, §7; Book II, Ch. XXIII, §8; Book II, Ch. XXIII, §10; Book II, Ch. XXIII, §37; Book III, Ch. IX, §1; Book III, Ch. IX §17; Book III, Ch. XI, §21; Book IV, Ch. III, §7; Book IV, Ch. III, §9, and Book IV, Ch. VII, §15).

Locke says no such thing about modes or ideas of modes. In addition—as we have seen—Locke claims powers belong only to substances (Book II, Ch. XXI, §16). If modes had powers, then Locke couldn’t claim that powers are attributes *only of* substances. We thus have no reason to think that modes inherit powers from the substances upon which they depend.

It’s also worth noting that it looks like those who give mode readings of Locke on persons think persons *just are consciousnesses*. (LoLordo surely suggests this, as we saw above.)

Locke doesn't define "consciousness," but it doesn't seem far-fetched to think that what he means is self-conscious thinking. We know Locke claims that thinking is a power, and it thus seems safe to conclude that consciousness is a power. As we saw in the last chapter, Locke claims that no power can have a power. He says, "*Liberty*, which is but a power ... cannot be an attribute or modification of the *Will*, which is also but a power." (Book II, Ch. XXI, §14). So, if persons *just are consciousnesses*, and consciousness is a power, then persons can't have powers.¹²⁹

We know that persons have powers, however. Persons have the power to plan, to will, to act, to forbear acting" etc. Those who stress that persons are moral agents—like those who give mode readings of Lockean persons do—most certainly believe persons have these powers. If they didn't, we wouldn't, or shouldn't, hold persons morally responsible for their actions. So, it looks like we should conclude that persons aren't mere consciousnesses—but *things with consciousnesses*—or substances.¹³⁰

Even with this in mind, those who hold a mode view might now claim that because Locke isn't explicit about the ontological status of consciousness, it could well be that

¹²⁹ Rickless claims that consciousness/thinking is not a power for Locke. But he also claims that "the ability to consider oneself as oneself is, by Locke's lights, a power (an *active* power, because it is a power to do rather than a power to be done to)" (Draft May 28, 2012). I fail to see how the ability to consider oneself as oneself is distinct from self-conscious thought, and thus, how this can be a power and consciousness not. Moreover, Locke explicitly claims that thinking is power—as I mention (Book II, Ch. XXI, §6)—so I think this holds. Rickless also claims that those who hold the mode interpretation are not going to want to claim that persons are powers. Moreover, he points out that if "Locke thought that persons are consciousnesses and that consciousnesses are powers, then he would be committed to the view that persons are relations!" (email exchange). But my claim was never that mode interpreters think persons are powers. It's that if they think persons just are consciousnesses, this is what they're ultimately committed to, and this is indeed problematic for powers can't have powers (and persons have powers). I also think this consideration—that if persons are consciousnesses and consciousness is a power, and powers are relations, then Locke would be committed to the claim that persons are relations (which of course is a bad thing!)—is just further evidence why we ought not think persons are mere consciousnesses (not further evidence for why consciousness is not a power).

¹³⁰ It's additionally worth noting that Locke refers to a person's consciousness on more than one occasion. It seems that if persons just were consciousnesses then Locke couldn't use the possessive in this way.

consciousness is a mode. They may even press on and say that persons are modes who get their powers through the substances upon which they depend. I think I have given ample evidence against this, but here is one further thing to consider: If persons are modes who get their powers through the substances upon which they depend, we'd have to think that if a person has a power, so does that substance.

Yet, we think persons have powers that men don't. The same goes for souls. Moreover, we think that the powers of persons and the substances to which they are intimately related come apart. Locke does too. This is why we don't hold the human being responsible for something she did while in the midst of a fugue state, for example. This is also why it is the person, and not the soul (alone), that is judged on Judgment Day, according to Locke. This makes it seem like persons can't be modes who get their powers through the substances upon which they depend and persons must be substances instead.

Thus, while it is important to consider what Locke says about our conceptions of "substance" and "mode," the way Locke proceeds in the "Identity and Diversity" chapter, Locke's anti-essentialism and especially Locke's claims about the possibility of a demonstrative science of ethics, what we learn as result of this kind of examination doesn't point us in the direction of a mode reading of Locke on persons, as Mattern and LoLordo claim.¹³¹ What Locke says about substance, power and agency in other parts of the *Essay* gives us compelling evidence that Lockean persons are particular substances. Therefore, despite the growing popularity of mode interpretations, and our desire to resolve the apparent tension between Locke's definition

¹³¹ It's worth noting that while Locke was at one time confident about the possibility of a demonstrative science of ethics, it looks like Locke's optimism eventually faded—and Mattern points this out.

of “person” and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons, we can’t think Lockean persons are modes.¹³² We have to think they are substances instead.¹³³

D. The Substance Approach

Given this, we ought to consider the last remaining interpretative resolution to the apparent tension between Locke’s definition of “person” and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons: the Substance Approach. Those who utilize the Substance Approach claim that Locke’s definition of “person” marks an idea of a particular substance and work to make Locke consistent from there.

¹³² In response to the arguments I have given here, Ruth Mattern (Margaret Wilson Conference, Dartmouth College, June 2012) claims that I have conflated between Locke’s two distinctions between substance and mode. There is the first: substances are things and modes are dependences on such things. But there is also a second, which Woolhouse points out: All that has a real essence is a substance and all that lacks a real essence (in any real sense) is a mode. Under this kind of interpretation we know the real essences of modes because they don’t have any. While I think I am on board with the claim that whatever conforms to our ideas of modes will not have a real essence in itself, I am not sure I am on board with the claim that whatever lacks a real essence is a mode—as I pointed out in Chapter 3. In addition, it seems to me that we must have evidence that we know the real essence of persons to conclude that persons lack real essences and to further conclude that persons are modes. As far as I am concerned, this brings us back to the arguments I offered above: there is no evidence that we know the real essence of persons and additional evidence to the contrary. So even if we pull in this further distinction of Woolhouse’s this doesn’t change the direction of my argument or my considered conclusion.

¹³³ At this point some might wonder why I haven’t considered whether persons could be relations. After all, as I pointed out in a footnote, our ideas of relations are adequate too. (M.A. Stewart asked just this question after I gave the above arguments at the Locke Workshop in St. Andrews (June 2012).) My reply is that I am simply responding to the trend in the secondary literature here. Those who don’t claim persons are substances claim that persons are modes. It would be worth considering why those who think Lockean persons are modes couldn’t just as easily think they are relations. Regardless, I take it that a relation reading only gets off the ground if one thinks that the idea we call “person” is adequate and, as we have seen, there is no evidence that this is the case and much that suggests the contrary. There is more that could be said about why persons couldn’t or shouldn’t be relations for Locke but I will leave it at that for now.

The most accepted or cited version of the Substance Approach is that of Alston and Bennett.¹³⁴ As we have seen, Alston and Bennett claim that because Locke uses the terms “thing” and “being” in his definition of “person,” Locke’s definition of “person” marks an idea of a substance. Nevertheless, Locke means something different by “substance” when he claims that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person than when he deems an entity a substance—making the apparent tension between Locke’s definition of “person” and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons disappear.

Alston and Bennett contend that we ought to take Locke to mean “thing-like item that is quantified over at a basic level of one’s ontology” when he uses the word “substance” in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter (Alston and Bennett, 38). This is because Alston and Bennett think the concept of “substratum” is too empty under Locke’s view (Alston and Bennett, 31). In addition, the “thing-like item that is quantified over at a basic level of one’s ontology” reading of “substance” best aligns with Locke’s discussion of the identity of other entities, including oaks and horses; and we must read Locke as using the same sense of “substance” throughout the “Identity” chapter for this area of Locke’s text to have an acceptable degree of unity.

Alston and Bennett also claim that their reading of Locke puts him in good company, as the history of philosophy is steeped in the tradition of claiming that substances are part-less self-sufficient simples. This, according to Alston and Bennett, was the view of both Aquinas and

¹³⁴ Ken Winkler, Martha Brandt Bolton, Vere Chappell and Sam Rickless (2012 draft) all think persons are particular substances too, though now it seems that Bolton has moved toward the view that persons are modes that organize body and mind composites (?). This is something Bolton intimated at the Locke Workshop at St. Andrews (June 2012) and something Bolton claimed at the Woolhouse Conference at York (June 2012), though this is not yet in print. Part of Bolton’s current picture is that Locke limits his use of “substance” to that of simple substance in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter, much like Alston and Bennett. If this is the case, then what I say in response to Alston and Bennett will apply to Bolton as well. And what I say regarding modes above likely applies too. (I will additionally note that I’m not sure why Bolton puts so much emphasis on organization, when it’s not clear that this is actually part of Locke’s picture of modes. Or, if it is, it’s certainly not something he stresses.)

Leibniz (Alston and Bennett, 39). Finally, Alston and Bennett argue that reading Locke as having this conception of “substance” in mind makes the best sense of many difficult passages in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter—including the passages where Locke discusses the persistence conditions of persons.

Under Alston and Bennett’s reading, then, we can take Locke to think that persons are substances, and that sameness of person does not consist in sameness of substance, without being inconsistent, because when Locke uses the term “substance” when describing the persistence conditions of persons, he is using it in this special or basic way. Alston and Bennett thus take Locke to be saying that indeed persons are things (“substances” in the usual “particular substance” sense), but such things don’t depend for their persistence on the identity of the most basic things there are (“substances” in the “thing-like item that is quantified over at a basic level of one’s ontology” sense).

Given what we uncovered above, I think that Alston and Bennett are right to claim that persons are particular substances for Locke. I also think that Alston and Bennett are right to claim that we ought to see making this consistent with the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons as our task. Moreover, as we saw in the last chapter, Locke does distinguish between what he calls “simple” and what he calls “compounded” (particular) substances. Alston and Bennett thus may be right to think that when Locke discusses the diachronic identity of persons and other entities, he is drawing upon this distinction. In what follows I will describe why we ought not embrace Alston and Bennett’s reading of the “Identity and Diversity” chapter, even though this is the case.

E. Why Alston and Bennett's Substance Approach Won't Do

Although Alston and Bennett are right to claim that Lockean persons are substances, we ought not conclude that the idea Locke calls “person” marks an idea of a particular substance just because Locke calls persons “things” and “beings”—as Alston, Bennett and others who utilize the Substance Approach do. As I claim above, we can't conclude that Locke thinks persons are particular substances, just because he calls them “things” and “beings;” and this is because Locke sometimes describes modes as “things” or “beings.” The claim that Lockean persons are particular substances is thus one that needs to be argued for.¹³⁵

It should also be noted that while it could be the case that Locke is drawing upon the distinction he makes between simple and compounded substances in his discussion of identity as Alston and Bennett suggest, this is a distinction Locke says little to nothing about. This moreover is a distinction that Locke makes in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter. We thus might wonder how Locke makes or refers to such a distinction if the only thing he takes “substance” to mean is “thing-like item that is quantified over at a basic level of one's ontology” in this section of the text as Alston and Bennett claim.

Although Alston and Bennett claim that Locke has to be using “substance” to pick out the same referent throughout the “Identity and Diversity” chapter for this area of the text to have an acceptable degree of unity, it looks like the distinction Locke makes between simple and

¹³⁵ I think it would've done Alston and Bennett some good to argue that when Locke claims we have ideas of but three sorts of substances, he is restricting his use of “substance” to include only simple substances. As we saw in the last chapter, however, we need not read this claim in this way, and even if we do, it need not be the case that this means Locke uses the term “substance” to stand for “simple substance” *throughout* the “Identity and Diversity” chapter. (We will see why below.) I won't say much more about this here as it's not an interpretive move Alston and Bennett make. But it is worth noting it's a move they should've made, and it's a move I have a response to. (I think Martha Brandt Bolton is currently using Book II, Ch. XXVII, §2 as a motivation for an interpretation that claims Locke uses “substance” to mean “simple substance” alone in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter—so this could be important.)

compounded substances speaks against this. It's also the case that Locke often uses the term "substance" to stand for different ideas (and thus objects in the world) in the same *sentence* in other parts of the *Essay*. We saw this in the last chapter.¹³⁶ There is therefore little reason to think that Locke has to use "substance" to pick out the same referent throughout the "Identity and Diversity" chapter as Alston and Bennett claim. More importantly, although it is the case that Locke sometimes takes "substance" to stand for two different ideas in the same sentence, the name "substance" always stands for either the idea of particular substance or the idea of substratum, and this is the case throughout the *Essay*.

Nevertheless, Alston and Bennett are aware that their reading of Locke on "substance" is idiosyncratic. Alston and Bennett claim that Locke uses "substance" to mean "thing-like item that is quantified over at a basic level of one's ontology" in the "Identity and Diversity" chapter alone. They claim that everywhere else in the *Essay*, Locke takes "substance" to stand for the idea that picks out particular substance or the idea that picks out substratum. In fact, they say, "So far as we know, it is only in this one chapter that the term 'substance' carries this special emphasis on basicness, non-compositeness, or the like" (Alston and Bennett, 39). Thus, despite this interpretive strain, Alston and Bennett must think that the positive outcome of their reading of Locke on persons and "substance" in the "Identity and Diversity" chapter far outweighs any negative consequences such a reading might entail. I contend, however, that this is not the case, and as a result of Alston and Bennett's reading of Locke on substance, Locke is left in a situation that looks worse than the apparent tension we started with.

¹³⁶ Take, for instance, Locke's initial definition of "substance": "The *Ideas* of *Substances* are such combinations of simple *Ideas*, as are taken to represent distinct particular things, subsisting by themselves; in which the supposed, or confused *Idea* of Substance, such as it is, is always the first and chief" (Book II, Ch. XII, §6).

If we read Locke as using “substance” to mean “thing-like item that is quantified over at a basic level of one’s ontology” in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter and the “Identity and Diversity” chapter alone, as Alston and Bennett suggest, we are left with one of two interpretive consequences: we either have to read the “Identity and Diversity” chapter as disconnected from, and an afterthought to, the rest of the *Essay*; or we have to take it that Locke knowingly uses the name “substance” differently in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter, and yet doesn’t flag or highlight it, making him seem inconsistent. I will argue that the former is implausible, while the latter is unacceptable if what we aim for is a sympathetic interpretation.

If Locke either added the “Identity and Diversity” chapter as the last section of the last edition of the *Essay*, or worked on the “Identity and Diversity” chapter without reviewing other sections of the text, we might be able to read the “Identity and Diversity” chapter as disconnected from, and an afterthought to, the rest of the *Essay* as a lot of commentators, including Alston and Bennett do.¹³⁷ Nevertheless, as I noted in Chapter 2, Locke added the “Identity and Diversity” chapter to the second edition of the text—and four editions of the *Essay* were published during Locke’s lifetime, with a fifth published posthumously. Locke thus continued to work on, and revise, the *Essay* after he included the discussion of persons and their persistence conditions as a component part of the *Essay*. We also know one of the areas of the text that Locke revises after adding the discussion of persons and their persistence conditions to the *Essay* is his initial discussion of substance (in Book II, Ch. XXIII) and some of these changes are made in light of Locke’s correspondence with Stillingfleet, where Locke discusses both substance, and persons at great length (Alexander, 1980/1981). Locke thus continued to work on

¹³⁷ Implicit perhaps in either of these is the thought that Locke might have forgotten what he wrote prior.

and revise his view on substance, with his discussion of persons and their persistence conditions in mind.

We therefore can't read the "Identity and Diversity" chapter, and Locke's discussion of substance therein, as an afterthought to, or disconnected from the rest of the *Essay*, and Locke's epistemological and ontological commitments on substance as outlined in the previous chapter. Reading the "Identity and Diversity" chapter in this way is just not plausible given what we know about the *Essay* and Locke's labor on it.

If we adopt Alston and Bennett's reading of Locke, we would therefore have to think that Locke is inconsistent with his use of "substance," and knows about it—yet doesn't do anything to explain or reconcile it. We would have to think that Locke is aware of the fact that he introduces a new signification for the term "substance" in the middle of what is supposed to be a cohesive body of work, and yet doesn't either make it so this isn't so, or work to explain why this is the case—which doesn't look like the sympathetic reading of Locke we have been searching for.

At this point Alston and Bennett might say that it's understandable that Locke would use a new sense of "substance" in the "Identity and Diversity" chapter, as their view supposes. The "Identity and Diversity" chapter marks the first time Locke discusses the persistence conditions of particular substances, so their reading just reflects Locke's change of perspective, not a disconnect between Locke's thoughts on "substance."

I contend that while it's true that whatever Locke says about substance is going to have a new level of specificity when it comes to the "Identity and Diversity" chapter, this need not imply that in Locke's discussion of persons, he assigns a meaning to "substance" that's entirely different from that which comes before and after this discussion. Or if it is the case that in the

“Identity and Diversity” chapter, Locke assigns “substance” a meaning that is not found anywhere else in the *Essay*, as Alston and Bennett contend, one would think that because Locke continued to work through the chapter on “substance” between the second and final edition, Locke would somehow explain or flag this, when he first discusses substance in that chapter.¹³⁸

Locke doesn’t do this, however. So, we are still left to think that Locke talks about “substance” as if he’s referencing only the ideas that pick out particular substance or substratum, and then takes “substance” to mean something quite different in the middle of his work, before returning to the “particular substance” and “substratum” conception of “substance,” which he employs from there on out. This doesn’t seem to put Locke in a better position than the one we started with. In fact, it looks like if we go with Alston and Bennett’s reading of Locke on “substance” in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter, we have resolved the textual puzzle and created unity within that chapter, but at the price of creating even larger, and more systemic inconsistencies throughout Locke’s work.¹³⁹

¹³⁸ That is, we would think that when Locke introduces our idea of “substance,” he would say we have ideas of particular substances and substance in general or substratum. And, while this is all he is going to say about particular substances for now (in the “Substance” chapter), the later discussion of the persistence conditions of particular substances will bring with it a new notion of “substance,” namely: “thing-like item that is quantified over at a basic level of one’s ontology.”

¹³⁹ Locke claims horses, oaks, men and the like are particular substance kinds. As we have seen, this is an ontological commitment that Locke maintains throughout the *Essay* and in his correspondence with Stillingfleet. But under Alston and Bennett’s reading (and it seems Martha Brandt Bolton’s 2012 reading too) Locke doesn’t count said entities as substances in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter. So there is an even more disturbing disconnect that results if one takes Locke to use “substance” to refer to simple substances alone in Book II, Ch. XXVII than it might at first seem.

Worse yet, if we return to Locke's correspondence with Stillingfleet,¹⁴⁰ we will remember that Locke makes clear that he uses the name "substance" to stand for two ideas in the *Essay*: the idea that picks out particular substance, and the idea that picks out substratum. We can also see that although some (like Stillingfleet) have conflated the claims Locke makes about particular substance and substratum, Locke contends that he maintains a clear distinction between the two throughout the *Essay*. When Locke gives this response to Stillingfleet, he confirms that "substance" has these two referents, and these two referents alone. That is, Locke takes "substance" to refer to "particular substance" and "substratum"—and that is it.

Importantly, Locke corresponds with Stillingfleet between 1697 and 1699, which is after Locke adds the "Identity and Diversity" chapter to the *Essay* (in 1694). With this in mind, we can thus conclude that it's not only the case that this simple or basic notion of "substance" is idiosyncratic to the "Identity and Diversity" chapter—as Alston and Bennett admit. We can also say that Locke claims outright which ideas he takes the name "substance" to stand for, throughout the *Essay*, with his discussion of persons and their persistence conditions included, and neither of these ideas is an idea of a "thing-like item that is quantified over at a basic level of

¹⁴⁰ "[Locke referring to his writing in the *Essay*, but not quoting it]: ... [S]peaking in that place of the ideas of distinct substances, such as a man, horse, gold, &c. I say they are made up of certain combinations of simple ideas; which combinations are looked upon, each of them, as one simple idea, though they are many; and we call it by one name of substance ... from the custom of supposing a substratum, wherein that combination does subsist. So that in this paragraph I only give an account of the idea of distinct substances, such as oak, elephant, iron, &c. how, though they are made up of distinct complications ... yet they are looked on as one idea, called by one name, as making distinct sorts of substances. But that my notion of substance in general is quite different from these, and has no such combination of simple ideas in it, is evident from the immediately following words, where I say, [quoting himself in the *Essay*, Book II, Ch. XXIII, §2]: 'the idea of pure substance in general is only a supposition of we know not what support of such qualities as are capable of producing simple ideas in us.' And these two I plainly distinguish all along, particularly where I say, [Locke quoting himself in the *Essay*, Book II, Ch. XXIII, §6] 'whatever therefore be the secret and abstract nature of substance in general, all the ideas we have of particular distinct substances are nothing but several combinations of simple ideas, co-existing in such, though unknown, cause of their union, as makes the whole subsist of itself'" (Locke, *Works*, Vol. IV, pp. 17–18).

one's ontology." This counts heavily against the usage of "substance" that Alston and Bennett's interpretation suggests.

Finally, as we will see in the next chapter, Locke thinks "man" is a substance kind, and Locke refers to men or human beings as substances in the "Identity and Diversity" chapter. Since "man" is not a "thing-like item that can be quantified over at a basic level of one's ontology" for anyone (including Alston and Bennett) this counts as further evidence against their view.¹⁴¹

We can thus conclude that while Alston and Bennett are right to think that persons are particular substances for Locke, and that this can be made consistent with Locke's claims about sameness of substance, it looks like there is work to be done if we want to get a sympathetic substance reading of Locke on persons. This is a task I take up in the next chapter.

¹⁴¹ This makes it seem like "thing-like item that is quantified over at a basic level of one's ontology can't be what Locke means by "substance" in Book II, Ch. XXVII, and that what Alston and Bennett propose actually fails to resolve the apparent tension we started with. Hopefully why I say this will become clear in the next chapter.

V. MY SUBSTANCE READING OF LOCKE ON PERSONS

A. Introduction

There is so much to be said about Locke's "Identity and Diversity" chapter, given the vast number of important and controversial claims Locke makes in this section of his text. For our purposes, however, I am restricting our attention to the focus of our inquiry thus far: the apparent tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons.

As we saw in the last chapter, we have good reason to think that persons are particular substances for Locke. I will thus offer a substance reading of Locke on persons here. As we proceed, it will become clear that although Locke's *Essay* is mostly epistemological in nature, Locke is doing quite a bit of ontological or metaphysical work in the "Identity and Diversity" chapter. That being said, I don't contend that Locke has as robust of an ontological picture as some commentators have claimed, and think that Locke leaves a lot of gaps in his discussion of persons and their persistence conditions.

In what follows I will say something brief regarding Locke's claims about consciousness. I will then flesh out what Locke means when he claims that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person, and give an argument for why I think there is no tension between this and Lockean persons being substances.

B. The Importance of Consciousness

As we have seen, Locke claims the name "person" stands for the idea of 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." What's important to consider is what Locke goes

on to say: Locke claims that this consideration of self as the same self in different times and places is something done “only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to me essential to it: It being impossible for any one to perceive, without perceiving that he does perceive” (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §9).

It’s clear from the section of the text just quoted that consciousness is indeed important when it comes to persons. It’s also clear that the consciousness of persons is necessarily reflexive. I say this both because Locke claims that we can’t perceive without perceiving that we perceive, and because Locke goes on to claim that when we see something, we know it; when we hear, smell, taste, or feel something, we know it; and, likewise, when we meditate or will, we know it (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §9). In other words, we can’t do any thinking at all without knowing it.

Right after Locke makes clear that all thinking or consciousness is necessarily reflexive in persons, he goes on to say that we don’t look to substance to determine whether any person at time 2 is the same as any person at time 1. He says “Thus it is always as to our present Sensations and Perceptions: And by this every one is to himself, that which he calls *self*: It not being considered in this case, whether the same *self* be continued in the same, or divers Substances” (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §9).

If we were to interpret this claim without reading any further in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter, a plausible explanation for what Locke could mean by it is that when we try to determine whether a person at time 2 is the same as a person at time 1, we don’t consider whether the substratum of the person at time 2 is the same as the substratum of the person at time 1 to do so. This is because, as we have seen, Locke thinks every particular substance’s qualities are supported by substratum, though substratum is the kind of thing our finite minds can’t penetrate. (Thus, how or why would we look to substratum for any kind of telling information

about identity?) In addition many claim that the identity of any substance *is* dependent upon the identity of its substratum, and it's just this kind of claim that Locke is so concerned to exorcise.¹⁴²

This interpretation is thus consistent with what we have seen of Locke so far, and unlike Alston and Bennett, I do not reject the notion that substratum could play a role in some of the claims Locke makes about the persistence conditions of persons. When we read on, however, it becomes clear that Locke is making more of a metaphysical, than an epistemological point when he makes this claim:

Since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and 'tis that, that makes every one to be what he calls *self*; and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists *personal Identity*; *i.e.*, the sameness of a rational Being: And as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past Action or Thought, so far reaches the Identity of that *Person*; it is the same *self* now it was then; and 'tis by the same *self* with this present one that now reflects on it, that the Action was done." (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §9)

Here Locke is claiming that it is sameness of consciousness that makes for sameness of person. Moreover, it's not that consciousness plays a role in the persistence of persons, along with other factors. It is sameness of consciousness *alone* that makes for sameness of person, according to Locke.

We can thus say that although we don't have a detailed account of what consciousness is for Locke, all consciousness is self-consciousness (or at least in persons), and what it takes for any person at time 2 to be identical with a person at time 1 is that the person at time 2 have the same consciousness as the person at time 1.

Locke is therefore not merely saying that I don't look to substance to determine whether I am the same person as a person existing 5 years ago, because my finite understanding can't

¹⁴² To borrow a phrase from Antonia LoLordo.

penetrate substratum (though this is true). He's saying that I don't look to substance to determine whether I am the same person as a person existing 5 years ago, because it's not substance, but consciousness, that determines this.

What this and the more explicit claims Locke makes in §10 and §23¹⁴³ amount to is that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person. By now we are more than familiar with this turn of phrase. In what follows I will say something more about what I think Locke means by it.

C. Locke on Sameness of Substance and Persons

When Locke claims that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person, what he means is that the substances a person is intimately related to need not be the same for a person to persist. Moreover, the identity of said substances is not enough to ensure the persistence of any person. One such substance is the particular substance we call "body."

Locke thinks a person can persist, despite the fact that her body is no longer the same, and we get evidence for this claim in Book II, Ch. XXVII, §11:

The Limbs of his Body is to every one a part of *himself*: He sympathizes and is concerned for them. Cut off an hand, and thereby separate it from that consciousness, we had of its Heat, Cold, and other Affections: and it is then no longer a part of that which is *himself*, any more than the remotest part of Matter. Thus we see the *Substance*, whereof *personal self* consisted at one time, may be varied at another, without the change of personal

¹⁴³ "The Question being what makes the same *Person*, and not whether it be the same Identical Substance, which always thinks in the same *Person*, which in this case matters not at all ... For it being the same consciousness that makes a Man be himself to himself, *personal Identity* depends on that only, whether it be annexed only to one individual Substance, or can be continued in a succession of several Substances" (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §10). Here we get Locke claiming that a person can persist, whether her consciousness is "annexed" to one substance, or many substances. In other words, Locke takes it that sameness of substance is not necessary for sameness of person. "Nothing but consciousness can unite remote Existences into the same Person, the Identity of Substance will not do it" (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §23). Or, sameness of substance is not sufficient for sameness of person.

Identity: There being no Question about the same Person, though the Limbs, which but now were a part of it, be cut off.

Here it is clear that Locke thinks a person can survive a change in her body, like the loss of a limb.

There is no guarantee that wherever there is the same body, we have the same person, however. To make this point, Locke asks us to imagine what would happen if the little finger were to be separated from the rest of the body. Based upon what Locke says in the passage just cited and what we have experienced, I take it that most of us would think that the loss of a little finger doesn't seem like a significant change to a body. We might thus be inclined to think that if y were to lose a finger today, she would still be the same person as x (with the little finger) was yesterday. Nevertheless, Locke says this could fail to be the case: "Upon separation of this little Finger, should this consciousness go along with the little Finger, and leave the rest of the Body, 'tis Evident the little Finger would be the *Person*, the *same Person*; and *self* then would have nothing to do with the rest of the Body" (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §17).

Having what most of us would consider more or less the same body thus does not guarantee that a person will persist in that body, or that the person in that body is indeed the same, and Locke makes this clear: "Though if the same Body should still live, and immediately from the separation of the little Finger have its own peculiar consciousness, whereof the little Finger knew nothing, it would not at all be concerned for it, as a part of it *self*, or could own any of its Actions, or have any of them imputed to him" (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §18).¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁴ Although there is arguably *some* change to the body in the scenario just described (namely the loss of the little finger) it looks like Locke is using this example to show that sameness of substance is not sufficient for sameness of person; and, I say this because right after Locke describes the little finger scenario, he says: "This may shew us wherein *personal Identity* consists, not in the Identity of Substance, but as I have said, in the Identity of *consciousness*" (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §19).

Locke also claims that a person can persist despite the fact that she is no longer related to the same human being (or man). If we turn our attention to the “prince and the cobbler passage”—or section 15—we can see that this is the case.

In section 15 we are asked to imagine that the consciousness of a prince¹⁴⁵ enters and informs the body of a cobbler thereby filling the body of the cobbler with “princely thoughts.” Since the consciousness that was formerly in the body of the cobbler left when the consciousness of the prince entered it, Locke thinks everyone who imagines this scenario will conclude that the prince persists in the body of the cobbler. In other words, Locke thinks that everyone who imagines this scenario will conclude that the person that we are calling “prince” now persists in the body of the cobbler. Moreover, it looks like Locke thinks we ought to.¹⁴⁶ It’s difficult to determine what Locke intends for us to get out of this passage, but I will make some conjectures in what follows.

It looks like at the very least Locke wants us to realize that the idea we call “man” and the idea we call “person” are different names, that stand for different ideas, which pick out different objects in the world. This is the case even though we often use the name “man” and the name “person” interchangeably when we speak colloquially.¹⁴⁷ It also looks like what we get in the prince and the cobbler passage is Locke claiming that a person can persist, despite the fact that he no longer has the same body. More strikingly, it looks like what we *really* get in the prince and the cobbler passage is Locke claiming that a person can persist, despite the fact that he is no longer related to the same living organized body, or man, and I take this to be what

¹⁴⁵ Carried by the prince’s soul.

¹⁴⁶ I take it that this is what Locke means when he says, “Every one sees, he would be the same Person with the Prince, accountable only for the Prince’s Actions” (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §15).

¹⁴⁷ This is a point that Locke makes again in the text. It’s a point that comes up in Locke’s treatment of “man” in general, and in the story of the rational parrot (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §8) in particular. We also get the seed of this distinction in Book II, Ch. I.

Locke means when he says, “Every one sees, he would be the same Person with the Prince, accountable only for the Prince’s Actions: But who would say it was the same Man?” (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §15)¹⁴⁸

With this in mind we should consider one more aspect of the prince and the cobbler case: Given that every man’s qualities are supported by substratum,¹⁴⁹ it looks like when the prince’s consciousness is transferred to the body of the cobbler, we not only get the prince persisting, despite the fact that he is no longer related to the same living organized body, or man. It looks like we also get the prince persisting despite the fact that with this change of man comes a change of substratum. A person can thus persist despite the fact that he is no longer related to the same man, and this might mean that Locke is claiming that a person can persist despite the fact that with this change of man comes a change of substratum.

Then again, given how little Locke says about substratum, it’s hard to say if this is part of his view, or if he would even have a view on the matter. (We might, for instance, wonder how we would know such a thing, or what we would accomplish through inquiring about the matter, given that we can’t penetrate substratum.) What is clear is that Locke thinks a person can (at least in theory) persist despite a change in man.

That being said, a person can fail to persist, despite not being involved in a sci-fi switch like the one Locke describes in the prince and the cobbler case, and this becomes clear if we turn our attention to what we might call the “waking and sleeping Socrates case.” Here Locke claims, “If the same *Socrates* waking and sleeping do not partake of the same consciousness, Socrates waking and sleeping is not the same Person” (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §19). I take it that (at least

¹⁴⁸ Since Locke takes it that persons and human beings are indeed distinct, this is at least logically possible under his view.

¹⁴⁹ Because “man” is a kind of particular substance for Locke, and Locke claims that every particular substance’s qualities are supported by substratum.

here) “Socrates” is supposed to pick out Socrates, the human being, and although Socrates is the same human being by day as he is by night, Socrates is not the same person by day as he is by night. We thus have a situation in which we’ve got the same human being, but not the same person.

Being the same man is thus no guarantee that one is the same person, and Locke underscores this point in Section 20:

But yet possibly it will be objected, suppose I wholly lose the memory of some parts of my Life, beyond a possibility of retrieving them, so that perhaps I will never be conscious of them again; yet am I not the same Person, that did those Actions, had those Thoughts, that I was once conscious of, though I have now forgot them? To which I answer, that we must here take notice what the Word *I* is applied to, which in this case is the Man only. And the same Man being presumed to be the same Person, *I* is easily here supposed to stand also for the same Person. But if it be possible for the same Man to have distinct incommunicable consciousnesses at different times, it is past doubt the same Man would at different times make different Persons. (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §20)

Importantly, however, Locke doesn’t think that this kind of thing—being the same man, but not the same person—is just something that we merely imagine. Locke takes it that we think this kind of thing actually happens,¹⁵⁰ and that this is the case is reflected in our language:

But if it be possible for the same Man to have distinct incommunicable consciousnesses at different times, it is past doubt the same Man would at different times make different Persons; which, we see, is the Sense of Mankind in the solemnest Declaration of their Opinions, Humane Laws not punishing the *Mad Man* for the *Sober Man’s* Actions, nor the *Sober Man* for what the *Mad Man* did, thereby making them two Persons; which is somewhat explained by our way of speaking in *English*, when we say such an one *is not himself*, or *is besides himself*, in which Phrases it is insinuated, as if those who now, or, at least, first used them, thought, that *self* was changed, the *self* same Person was no longer in that Man. (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §20)

¹⁵⁰ We get evidence for this if we consider fugues and dissociative identity disorder too (though Locke himself doesn’t discuss these real-life cases).

Thus, while we might not be certain whether Locke thinks one could actually persist as the same person, without being the same man (as in the prince and the cobbler case)¹⁵¹ it's clear that Locke thinks one could actually be the same man, without being the same person.

Locke also thinks that a person can persist despite the fact that she no longer has the same soul; and we find evidence for this, if we turn to section 13. In Section 13, Locke claims: "But yet to return to the Question before us, it must be allowed, That if the same consciousness ... can be transferr'd from one thinking Substance to another, it will be possible, that two thinking Substances may make but one Person." Here I take Locke to mean that if consciousness could actually be transferred from one immaterial substance or soul, to another, then a person could persist, despite the fact that the soul her consciousness is annexed to is no longer the same.

At this point we should quickly remind ourselves of what Locke is talking about when he talks about souls, or immaterial substances. As we learned in Chapter 3, Locke calls a substance "immaterial" if it has immaterial qualities, and Locke takes thought to be immaterial. In addition, while Locke clearly contends that the immaterial cannot be reduced to, or explained in terms of, the material, Locke is not committed to substance dualism. Locke is not committed to thinking that the substrata that support material qualities can't also support immaterial qualities; and, as we have seen this is because Locke thinks substratum is impossible for our finite minds to penetrate. Moreover there is nothing in the concepts "thought" and "matter" that allows us to deduce that one excludes the other. Thus when Locke discusses immaterial substances or souls, what we should think of are particular substances with immaterial qualities, supported by substrata (though said substrata may also support material qualities).

¹⁵¹ Because this is a thought experiment and could just entail logical possibility.

Locke is thus saying that if while I am sitting here, the soul in my body could be replaced by another soul, and my consciousness could be transferred seamlessly, I (the person) would persist through this change of soul. Moreover while we don't know whether the qualities of souls are supported by a substratum wholly different from the substratum that supports material qualities, it could be the case that what we get through this scenario is a change in substratum. This is because a soul is a particular substance, and each particular substance's qualities are supported by substratum. Then again, like I said earlier, it's tough to say what Locke's view on this would be, given how little he says—and how little he thinks we can know—about substratum. Regardless, Locke contends that a person can persist through a change in soul.¹⁵²

A person can fail to persist despite the fact that there have been no changes of this kind, however. To illustrate this, Locke asks the reader:

Suppose a Christian *Platonist* or *Pythagorean*, should upon God's having ended all his works of Creation the Seventh Day, think his Soul hath existed ever since; and should imagine it has revolved in several Humane Bodies, as I once met with one, who was perswaded his had been the Soul of *Socrates* ... would any one say, that he, being not conscious of any of *Socrates*'s Actions or Thoughts, could be the same Person with *Socrates*? ... Let him also suppose it to be the same Soul, that was in *Nestor* or *Thersites*, at the Siege of *Troy* ... But he, now having no consciousness of any of the Actions either of *Nestor* or *Thersites*, does, or can he, conceive himself the same Person with either of them? Can he be concerned in either of their Actions?

I take it that the answer Locke expects from us is “no”—the Pythagorean who doesn't have the same consciousness as Socrates is not the same person as Socrates; and, this is the case even though the Pythagorean and Socrates share the same soul. The same goes for the Pythagorean and Nestor or Thersites; and, Locke goes on to say as much:

¹⁵² There might be reason to think that although Locke is agnostic about substance dualism (when it comes to finite substances), Locke is using the term “soul” in the substance dualist sense in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter—for argument's sake. If this is the case, however, I don't think that what I say about a change in substratum is in any way ruled out. We could come to the same conclusion regardless.

So that this consciousness not reaching to any of the Actions of either of those Men, he is no more one *self* with either of them, than if the Soul or immaterial Spirit, that now informs him, had been created, and began to exist, when it began to inform his present Body, though it were never so true, that the same Spirit that informed *Nestor's* or *Thersites's* Body, were numerically the same that now informs his.

Having the same soul as y is thus no guarantee that one is the same person as y.¹⁵³

We can thus say that when Locke claims that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person, what he means is that sameness of body is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person; and, this means a person can persist, despite a change in body, or fail to persist despite there having been no such change. It's also the case that sameness of man is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person; and, this means a person can persist, despite no longer being related to the same man, or fail to persist despite there having been no such change. Moreover, sameness of soul is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person; and, this means a person can persist, despite a change in soul, or fail to persist despite there having been no such change.

This could mean that sameness of substratum is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person and a person can persist despite a change in substratum, or fail to persist despite there having been no such change, but Locke is not clear on this last point. As I claimed

¹⁵³ Of this, Locke says: "The same immaterial substance without the same consciousness, no more making the same Person by being united to any Body, than the same Particle of Matter without consciousness united to any Body, makes the same Person" (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §14). Also, note, it's not clear, aside from when it is stipulated, how one would know that she has the same soul as another. After all, Locke never gives us the persistence conditions for souls. And, while it's tempting to think that souls are likely simple substances and might have to have the same substratum in order to persist, because of this, we don't know enough about Locke on simple and compounded substances to make this assertion. It would also be difficult to know what this would look like, or whether Locke could even make this claim, given that Locke thinks we can't penetrate substratum. It's thus also difficult to know whether the Pythagorean Locke discusses fails to be the same person as Socrates, Nestor and Thersites, even though he has the same soul as the soul that was in the body of Socrates, Nestor and Thersites—and this means that the Pythagorean fails to be the same person as Socrates, Nestor and Thersites, even though the Pythagorean's consciousness is annexed to the same substratum as Socrates, Nestor and Thersites' consciousnesses were annexed to—or not.

above it's not even clear whether Locke would have a considered opinion on the matter.

Importantly, Locke doesn't claim that a person can persist despite not being the same particular substance, or fail to persist despite being the same particular substance—as Butler, Reid and others have erroneously suggested¹⁵⁴—and this means Locke doesn't deny that persons are substances. That is, there is no tension between Locke's definition of “person” and the claim that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person. Moreover, Locke makes similar claims about the persistence conditions of other entities, which he takes to be substances. This becomes clear if we turn to Locke's discussion of men.

Earlier in the “Identity and Diversity” chapter Locke claims that a man can persist despite a change in body. He says, “This also shews wherein the Identity of the same *Man* consists; viz. in nothing but a participation of the same continued Life, by constantly fleeting Particles of Matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized Body” (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §6). Presumably, the contrary is true as well. A man could fail to persist despite no such change. This makes it look like the persistence of the animal we call “man” is not dependent upon the identity of the substances to which it's related. This also sounds a lot like what Locke says about persons, and Locke goes on to assert that both of these assumptions or observations are true: He says, “Different Substances, by the same consciousnesses (where they do partake in it) being united into one Person; as well as different Bodies, united by the same Life are united into one Animal, whose *Identity* is preserved, in that change of Substances, by the unity of one continued Life” (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §10). We can thus say that like persons, animals—including men—can persist through a change in the substances to which they are related.

¹⁵⁴ See Chapter 2.

This doesn't mean that men are not substances, however. "Man" is an archetypal particular substance for Locke. As we have seen, Locke claims "man" is a substance kind throughout the *Essay*. Moreover, Locke maintains that men are particular substances after making the above claims about the persistence of men. We see this in Locke's correspondence with Stillingfleet¹⁵⁵ and in Locke's discussion of the persistence of persons. Part of what Locke means, after all, when he claims that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person is that sameness of *man* is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §15, 19, and 20). We thus have evidence that there are some particular substances that can persist through a change in the substances to which they are intimately related, and this seems to be part of the larger point Locke is trying to make in his treatment of identity.¹⁵⁶ Given what we have learned in the last few chapters, it's clear that this includes not only men (plus other animals and plants) but also persons!

If we consider what we have learned between this chapter and the last two, we can and should come to the following conclusions: 1) Persons are substances for Locke. This means a person has to persist as the same particular substance to persist at all. (This is a rather trivial fact about the persistence of any particular substance.) That being said, the body, man, and soul any person is related to need not be the same for her to persist, and even if they are, she may fail to persist. 2) A careful reading of Book II, Ch. XXVII shows that this is what Locke means when he claims that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person.

¹⁵⁵ Which takes place between 1697 and 1699—after the "Identity and Diversity" Chapter was first added to the *Essay* (1694): [Locke referring to his writing in the *Essay*, but not quoting it]: ... [S]peaking in that place of the ideas of distinct substances, such as a **man**, horse, gold, &c. I say they are made up of certain combinations of simple ideas; which combinations are looked upon, each of them, as one simple idea, though they are many; and we call it by one name of substance ... from the custom of supposing a substratum, wherein that combination does subsist" (Locke, *Works*, Vol. IV, 17–18).

¹⁵⁶ I take this (at least in part) to be what Locke means when he says, "'Tis not therefore Unity of Substance that comprehends all sorts of *Identity*, or will determine it in every Case" (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §7).

Nothing Locke says therein amounts to a denial that persons are substances, for it's not as if Locke claims persons can persist despite not being the same particular substance or fail to persist despite being the same particular substance, as commentators and objectors have assumed. 3) This means there is no tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons. Or, in other words, the purported tension that's been at the center of our inquiry is more apparent than real. 4) A careful look at Book II, Ch. XXVII shows that Locke makes similar claims about men, and Locke maintains that men are substances throughout the *Essay* and his correspondence with Stillingfleet. This means we have evidence beyond what Locke says about persons that Locke thinks there are particular substances which can persist through some changes in substance. 5) So we not only have evidence that there is no tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons, but also evidence that Locke's treatment of persons is in keeping with his treatment of some other kinds of substances. Importantly we didn't have to ascribe a conception of "substance" to Locke that there is no evidence he has in order to get this result—and this marks a significant difference between what I have said here and what we get in the Alston and Bennett interpretation. Before turning to further discussion of the details of Locke's view, I will say a bit more about this last point below.

If we return to the Alston and Bennett with what have learned here in mind, we will see that it's not only the case that their reading¹⁵⁷ creates the systemic inconsistencies I highlighted in the last chapter. It's also the case that Alston and Bennett's interpretation fails to resolve the apparent tension we started with. This is because, as we remember, Alston and Bennett claim that Locke takes "substance" to mean "thing-like item that is quantified over at a basic level of

¹⁵⁷ And others like theirs—most likely including Brandt Bolton's 2012 work-in-progress reading (St. Andrews, draft).

one's ontology" in the "Identity and Diversity" chapter. Yet, as we have seen here, one of the things Locke means when he claims that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person is that sameness of man is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person—and "man" is not a "thing-like item quantified over at a basic level of one's ontology." Thus we can't actually account for what Locke says when he gives the persistence conditions for persons if we assume Alston and Bennett's reading of Locke on "substance" in the "Identity and Diversity" chapter,¹⁵⁸ and this means we can't actually resolve the apparent tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons either. What I have offered here is thus a significant step forward from the interpretation of Alston and Bennett.¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁸ Moreover, Alston and Bennett couldn't claim that because animals (like men) are living organized bodies "man" could thus be described as a "thing-like item quantified over at a basic level of one's ontology" and escape this interpretive problem. This is because any animal—including the kind we call "man"—and its matter are distinct for Locke.

¹⁵⁹ Some may worry that I have taken the rather troubling or mysterious claims Locke makes about the persistence of persons and attempted to explain them by appealing to something equally as mysterious: Locke's treatment of the persistence of men. However, I see the argument for persons being substances as independent from what I say about men. And I don't think the dissolution of the tension rests upon what I say about men either. We should think that persons are substances for Locke because of what he says about substance, power and agency. We should think there is no tension between this and the claim that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person because when Locke makes this claim he doesn't say or mean to say that a person can persist despite not being the same particular substance or fail to persist despite being the same particular substance. I appeal to what Locke says about men to show that Locke says something similar about them, while maintaining they are substances. So there is evidence that Locke thinks there are particular substances that can persist despite a change in the substances to which they are related. That being said, no particular substance (whether it be a person, man, oak, etc.) can persist despite not being the same particular substance or fail to persist despite being the same particular substance. Persons have to be the same particular substances to persist, just like men do. What allows a person to persist as the same particular substance is having the same consciousness. What allows a man to persist as the same particular substance is having the same life.

Now what one might be worried about is the mystery that remains: How do persons have the same consciousness over time despite the possible turn over in substances to which they are related? Appealing to men or plants and animals doesn't help us, because Locke merely claims that animals can have the same continued life despite a turn over in the substances to which they are related, though he doesn't say how. But I am not appealing to men to explain this.

Moreover I agree that there is a mystery here. I don't think that this is one that other commentators have solved, however, so the fact that this remains mysterious in my reading isn't something

D. Filling in the Blanks?

At this point we may still wonder why Locke makes these claims about persons, bodies, men and souls in the first place, however. After examining Locke's discussion of persons as we have, the following question naturally arises: What is the relationship between persons, bodies, men and souls, according to Locke?

Some commentators have claimed that persons are substances which contain bodies, men, and souls as parts.¹⁶⁰ This sounds appealing because it does seem that the relationship between persons, bodies, men and souls is indeed a close one. It would be difficult to see why Locke would feel the need to mention that the body, man or soul a person is related to need not be the same for her to persist, and that a person can fail to persist even when there is no change in said substances, otherwise. Despite these initial attractions, I do not think we should attribute this view to Locke. If we assume that persons are substances which contain men as parts, Locke faces considerable problems as a result. I will outline two below. The first concerns the possibility of non-human persons, while the second concerns the possibility of "life after death."

If persons contain men as parts, then it is difficult to figure how there could be non-human persons; and, it seems like this is something Locke would want to leave open as a possibility. In fact, this is something Locke *does* leave open as a possibility, and we get evidence

particularly problematic for me. In fact, I don't think this is a mystery that we can look to Locke to solve because I'm not sure that he has a considered view on the matter.

Locke claims that it's not sameness of body, man or soul that determines whether any person persists or not. It's just sameness of consciousness that does the job. But what determines whether consciousness persists is not something Locke explains. This might not even be something Locke thinks we can know. Thus while my aim hasn't been to explain something mysterious in terms of something just as mysterious, I do tend to think that there is much that we can't know about the persistence of particular substances in Locke's view, and of course some mystery will remain regarding the persistence of persons as a result.

¹⁶⁰ This is what Sam Rickless assumes in "Are Locke's Persons Substances?" (Draft June 2012)

for this in the “rational parrot” passage (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §8).¹⁶¹ In addition, if human beings are parts of persons, then we might worry that no person could survive the death of the human being that constitutes her.¹⁶² If this were the case, then persons wouldn’t be able to meet God in the afterlife or receive Divine punishment and reward; and while this would be an unfortunate feature of almost any early modern philosopher’s view, it would be a particularly unacceptable consequence for Locke, because Locke makes explicit positive claims about Divine punishment and reward in his discussion of persons and their persistence conditions.¹⁶³ Given this, I don’t think we should read Locke as claiming that persons are substances constituted by men.

In fact, I don’t think we even ought to claim that Lockean persons contain bodies and souls as parts or assert that this makes persons compounded substances as a result. This is because it’s hard to say whether Locke thinks persons contain bodies and souls as parts, and even harder to determine whether this would make persons compounded, rather than simple, substances as a result. As we saw in Chapter 2, Locke merely mentions that there are simple and compounded substances. He doesn’t say anything about what makes some substances simple and other compounded or do anything to elaborate on the distinction he’s made. It’s thus difficult to determine what Locke has in mind when he makes this distinction or if persons would count as simple or compounded substances.

¹⁶¹ This might just be a logical possibility. I’m not sure. If Mattern and LoLordo are right in identifying the “moral man” with “person” it also looks like we get evidence in Book III, Ch. XI, §16 for the possibility of non-human persons.

¹⁶² This is because all Locke tells us when he claims that sameness of man is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person is that the identity of the man does not determine the identity of the person. This could mean that although persons need not be related to the same man to persist, they have to continue to be related to a man to survive; and, this seems all the more likely if human beings are constitutive parts of persons. It should be noted, however, that Locke’s views on the resurrection are difficult to discern. (See Dan Kaufman on this.)

¹⁶³ See Book II, Ch. XXVII, §15 for a reference to the Resurrection. Also, Locke claims that we should accept what little knowledge we have when it comes to persons and tracking them over time because God will have it figured out in the end, and wherever our theories and courts fail, justice will prevail. Moreover, this will happen on Judgment Day (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §22 and §26).

We should also note that while Locke claims we have ideas of but three sorts of substances (God, finite intelligences, and bodies) at the beginning of the “Identity and Diversity” chapter and some who claim persons are compounded substances appeal to this as evidence for their view, we have seen that we need not read Locke as saying anything about simple substances when he makes this claim. Moreover, even if Locke is making a claim about simple substances when he claims we have ideas of but three sorts of substances, we can’t necessarily conclude that this means Locke thinks persons are compounded substances. After all, one way of thinking about persons is as finite spirits.¹⁶⁴

Finally, I think we ought not conclude that persons are simple or compounded substances because Locke doesn’t come down on the matter. That is, Locke himself is agnostic when it comes to this issue. We get evidence for this in Book II, Ch. XXVII, §17, where Locke claims, “*Self* is that conscious thinking thing, (whatever Substance, made up of whether Spiritual, or Material, Simple, or Compounded, it matters not)”¹⁶⁵

Thus, as I see it, we can only conclude that persons are particular substances and that the persistence of any person depends upon the identity of her consciousness, not the identity of the particular substances to which she is related. A person can persist despite not being related to the same body, human being, or soul; and a person can fail to persist where there are no such

¹⁶⁴ And under that kind of reading, that would make persons simple substances.

¹⁶⁵ Those who think persons are compounded substances and also think compounded substances are particular substances which contain parts might claim that what Locke says here suggests that persons are “made up of” other substances, and this means that persons are compounded rather than simple. I contend, however, that “made up of” is a cumbersome phrase reflecting Locke’s agnosticism about whether persons are simple or compounded. Moreover, since Locke doesn’t say anything substantive about the distinction between simples and compounds, he could mean myriad things when he draws this distinction, and there is no reason to think that he has to mean that compounded substances contain parts. Thus, even if persons have parts and even if we have evidence persons can persist through a change in said parts, we might not be able to conclude they are compounded. Finally, it seems that Locke doesn’t think this much matters when it comes to what persons are or tracking them over time, and this is reflected in the language he uses: He tells us “it matters not.”

changes. But when it comes to whether persons are substances, which contain other particular substances as parts—or whether this makes persons compounded—we can't say.¹⁶⁶

E. Objections and Replies

At this point some might contend that although my interpretation doesn't saddle Locke with the unfortunate consequences as one that assumes persons contain men as parts would, it leaves Locke with other problems. It looks like my interpretation leaves Locke with a proliferation of substances. In my reading, wherever you have persons, you tend to have bodies, human beings and souls; and, all of these entities are substances, and each of them is distinct.

¹⁶⁶ Those who think persons are compounded substances, which contain bodies and souls as parts might at this point claim that we have explicit evidence Locke thinks persons contain bodies as parts. This comes in Book II, Ch. XXVII, §11. In response I will say that it really does look like Locke is claiming bodies are parts of persons here. Then again, Locke often refers to the bodies of persons or a person's body ... and it's not clear that we could use the possessive in this way if persons contain, or are constituted by, bodies. In addition, it's not clear whether even if persons contain bodies as parts, this makes persons compounded, for as I have argued, this distinction is content-less. I am thus not denying that persons contain bodies as parts. I am claiming that Locke oscillates on the matter, and then claims to be agnostic about it.

Even given this, those who think persons are compounded substances, which contain bodies and souls as parts might go on to object that if bodies and souls aren't parts of persons, then persons sound less substance-like than they should because they rely on other substances (which they are not constituted by) for their subsistence, and Lockean substances are supposed to subsist by themselves. This is an objection I would anticipate from Rickless. I have a few things to say in response: 1) It's not clear how much persons depend upon bodies and souls for their existence. All Locke has made clear here is that the persistence of any person does not depend upon the identity of such particular substances (though I think we are right in assuming that Locke thinks it's likely there is some dependence (for there would be little need to mention bodies and souls when discussing the persistence of persons otherwise). 2) Even if we assume that persons contain bodies and souls as parts, it should be noted that men are distinct from their bodies. So we might get persons depending upon other particular substances regardless. 3) It should also be noted that it's not exactly clear what Locke means when he claims that particular substances subsist by themselves. 4) It's additionally worth noting—as I have mentioned before—that no finite substance has completely independent existence, for their existence is not necessary. (God is a substance upon which every finite substance depends for its existence, and God is certainly not a constitutive part of any finite substance.) 5) Relatedly, finite substances depend upon other finite substances all the time for their subsistence (take for example the finite substances in our environment that we need to survive). 6) Finally, as we will see below, and as should be clear from what I say above, I am not committed to Lockean persons being simple. I am agnostic—as I take Locke to be. I am just adamant that persons can't contain men as parts.

I should start by saying that when I claim we ought not conclude that persons are compounded substances, this does not mean that I am committed to the idea that persons don't contain other substances as parts. Nor does this mean I am committed to the claim that Lockean persons are simple substances as a result. I think Locke is agnostic when it comes to this issue. That being said, even if we assume that persons have bodies and souls as parts, it doesn't look like we get out of the proliferation of substances issue. This is because even if persons contain bodies and souls as parts, Locke calls "bodies" and "souls" substances. Wherever you have a person, you thus have a substance, plus bodies and souls, which are themselves substances. (And men too!) So a proliferation of substances remains. As I see it, then, my reading—which is agnostic when it comes to whether persons contain other substances as parts, and whether this means persons are simple or compounded substances for Locke—doesn't leave Locke any more susceptible to a proliferation of substances charge than one in which it is asserted that Lockean persons are compounded substances which contain bodies and souls as parts.

It's also worth remembering that Locke is a nominalist when it comes to substance kinds. Locke therefore contends that no entity has anything which is essential to it except as a member of a kind.¹⁶⁷ When I ask whether y at time 2 is the same as x at time 1, I thus have to specify what I mean. If, for example, I ask whether Michael is the same as 5 years ago, the question which naturally arises within the Lockean framework is, "same what?" Same mass of matter? Same man? Same person? This makes it sound like there are a lot of substances in one place at any given time that the name "Michael" picks¹⁶⁸ out—and this makes it sound like a proliferation of substances is a feature of Locke's nominalism, rather than a problem with my interpretation of

¹⁶⁷ Which is something we create when we create the nominal essence, based upon the qualities we observe (Book III, Ch. VI, §4. Also see Book III, Ch. VI, §32).

¹⁶⁸ Or could pick.

his view. It's therefore not just that I think we get a proliferation of substances regardless of whether we think persons contain bodies and souls as parts. It's that I don't think a proliferation of substances is a problem for Locke to begin with.

In response to this some might claim that we do have a problem, however. This is because Locke claims that no two things of the same kind can be in the same place at the same time, and in my view, persons are particular substances and so are the souls to which they are related. Moreover, persons and souls are both thinking substances. Persons and souls are thus of the same kind, and it looks like we get a violation of Locke's place-time-kind principle as a result.¹⁶⁹ Initially it seems like this should be cause for worry. In what follows I will explain why it ought not.¹⁷⁰

As I mentioned in Chapter 3, it's worth noting that it's difficult to discern what Locke means when he claims that no two things of the same kind can be in the same place at the same time. This is, at least in part, because Locke is agnostic when it comes to substance dualism. Clearly what Locke has in mind is not what a Cartesian would mean when making this assertion.

I tend to think that when Locke claims that no two things of the same kind can be in the same place at the same time, he uses "kind" as he does elsewhere—to stand for species. Locke means that no two horses can be in the same place at the same time. No two persons can be in the same place at the same time. And no two souls can be in the same place at the same time. In other words, no two entities that are picked out by the same nominal essence can be in the same place at the same time.

I realize that it's difficult to see how we could be certain that no two entities of the same kind could be in the same place at the same time because Locke claims that there are no natural

¹⁶⁹ Uzgalis offered this objection at the 2012 Central Meeting of the APA.

¹⁷⁰ If this is a problem, it is a problem for any substance reading of Locke on person's—not just mine.

kinds. We thus might wonder how the ideas we have could have anything to do with what can and can't be in the same place at the same time in the world. One possibility is that because nominal essences are created in light of the observable qualities that real essences cause, what this really amounts to is that no two substances with the same real essence can be in the same place at the same time. But then we might worry how, since we can't penetrate real essence, we could be certain of this.¹⁷¹

This leads to an important question: What does Locke think he is doing when he posits the place/time/kind principle? Is Locke making a heavy ontological claim, or is he just giving an epistemological starting point for his discussion of identity? It might be that Locke is making a significant ontological claim. It could also be that what Locke is claiming when he says that no two things of the same kind can be in the same place at the same time is that when you see any entity, whether it be a horse or a man, in a particular place at a particular time, you can be sure that at that instant and in that very spot, there is only one horse and likewise one man. Moreover, this is the case, no matter how difficult the questions can be when it comes to the diachronic identity of either entity.

I am inclined to think that this is what Locke is up to based upon the beginning of this discussion, where Locke claims that we can be sure a thing can't be in two different places at the same time. He says, "When we see any thing to be in any place in any instant of time, we are sure, (be it what it will) that it is that very thing, and not another, which at the same time exists in another place, how like and undistinguishable soever it may be in all other respects." (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §1). Here I think we get evidence that Locke is talking about members of kinds as he talks about them elsewhere (kinds being "horse," "man," etc.). It's difficult to see how we could

¹⁷¹ There's also the fact that it looks like no two members of the same kind could have the same real essence. If they did, they would in fact be one and not two (or identical).

be even remotely convinced that an entity could be in two different places at the same time otherwise.¹⁷² What I take Locke to mean by this is that I know the horse before me now is not the same as the horse in the distant pasture despite how similar the two seem because an entity can't be in more than one place at the same time. This is one of the basic things we know, despite how difficult tracking any horse over time might be.

Thus about the horse I know that it can only be in one place at a time, and the horse before me now is there alone. There aren't other horses in that very same spot at that very same moment. This is what Locke means when he claims, "For we never finding, nor conceiving it possible, that two things of the same kind should exist in the same place at the same time, we rightly conclude, that whatever exists any where at any time, excludes all of the same kind, and is there it self alone" (Book II, Ch. XXVII, §1).

Likewise, a person can't be in more than one place at a time, and no two persons could be in the same place at the same time. So when there is a person before me now, I know that this person is not the same as the person in the next room despite how similar they might seem, for one thing can't be in two different places at the same time. I also know the man in front of me now is just one person and not two, for no two things of the same kind can be in the same place at the same time. This I know to be true, no matter how hard it is to track persons over time. In all of the thought experiments Locke uses, we never get Locke claiming that the same person could be in two different places at the same time, or that there are two persons in the same place at the same time. But this leaves open that a person and a soul could be in the same place at the

¹⁷² If Locke meant something really general like "thinking thing" or "material thing" by "kind" it's difficult to see how this worry would arise in the first place. That being said, it also naturally follows, due to solidity that no two bodies could be in the same place at the same time. The existence of one in a particular place at a particular time necessarily excludes the existence of another in that same place and at the same time.

same time.¹⁷³ We thus don't get a violation of the place-time-kind principle in my reading and it looks like we have escaped the most challenging objection those who hold mode interpretations can raise against a substance reading of Locke on persons.

F. Conclusion

As I see it, then, persons are particular substances which depend on sameness of consciousness, rather than the identity of the substances to which they are intimately related for their persistence. Because persons are particular substances a person must be the same particular substance to be the same person, but whether this is the case is not determined by the identity of the body, man or soul any person is related to. We can't be sure whether persons contain bodies and souls as parts, or whether this makes persons compounded substances for Locke. We can't be sure how many substrata any person is related to, or whether Locke had a considered view on the matter. We can be sure that Locke thinks persons and souls are distinct, but we can't be sure what makes them distinct, given Locke's agnosticism about substance dualism.¹⁷⁴ We can't even

¹⁷³ I recognize that Locke claims no two bodies can be in the same place at the same time, given solidity, but I don't think that this is incompatible with what I have said here. I should also note that Martha Brandt Bolton contends that what Locke means when he claims that no two things of the same kind can be in the same place at the same time is that no two simple substances can be in the same place at the same time and no two compounded substances can be in the same place at the same time. As we have seen above, I'm not sure we can come to any sort of conclusion about what Locke means when he makes the distinction between simple and compounded substances or where, within that distinction, persons lie, but I think it's at least worth pointing out that Bolton reads Locke as committed to thinking persons are compounded substances (or did—prior to 2012). If this is the case, however, then it looks like Locke violates the place/time/kind principle (under Bolton's reading of it) because under her reading men would be compounded substances too. This means we would get two compounded substances (two things of the same kind) in the same place at the same time wherever we have both a person and a man. Moreover, although it looks like Locke is open to the possibility that there could be persons who aren't also human, most of the time when Locke is talking about persons, he is talking about entities which have an intimate relationship with human beings. (This is why we often use the names "person" and "man" interchangeably.) So it doesn't seem as if Locke actually avoids violating the place-time-kind principle under Bolton's reading of him. (Note: Bolton's work in progress (as presented at the Locke Workshop at the University of St. Andrews in June 2012) indicates a move away from this view, due to what seems to be (at least in part) recognition of this consequence.)

¹⁷⁴ Though this may have something to do with having different powers.

be sure what individuates any consciousness or what makes any particular consciousness the same over time, though this is indeed the thing that makes any person the same over time. We may also worry that if we did tell a story about this, it could make Locke's theory of personal identity seem somewhat circular.

This makes it look like there are a lot of missing pieces in Locke's picture of persons and some potential problems. My aim hasn't been to show that Locke's theory of personal identity is complete or without problems, however. My aim has been to show that even though there may indeed be problems with Locke theory of personal identity, a tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the claim that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person is not one of them. I think I have done that here.

VI. CONCLUSION

In this dissertation I have worked to put together the many claims Locke makes about substance, mode and persons throughout the *Essay* and his correspondence with Stillingfleet. I have argued that if we consider Locke's definition of "person" in light of what Locke says about substance, power, and agency, we have evidence Locke thinks persons are particular substances. I have also argued that if we put Locke's claim that sameness of substance is neither necessary nor sufficient for sameness of person back into context it becomes clear that Locke means the identity of the body, man or soul any person is related to need not be the same for her to persist, and even if said substances are the same, she may fail to persist.

When Locke claims that the identity of substance doesn't determine whether a person persists, he does *not* mean that a person can persist despite not being the same particular substance, or that a person can fail to persist despite being the same particular substance. This means that Locke does not deny that persons are particular substances. There is no apparent tension between Locke's definition of "person" and the persistence conditions Locke gives for persons as a result. Moreover, when we examine Locke's discussion of men, we get evidence that Locke's treatment of the diachronic identity of persons is in keeping with his treatment of the persistence of other substances. Thus while there are many missing pieces to Locke's picture of persons, we have a picture that's more complete than the one we started with.

Now we are in the position to start thinking about where Locke lies within the larger debate over personal identity. As I mentioned in the Introduction, Edmund Law, Anthony Collins, and David Hume appear to be on Locke's side of the early modern debate. Law defends Locke, Collins does much of the same (Clarke, 1928; Uzgalis, 2011) and it looks like Hume takes Locke

to his logical ends in his discussion of persons.¹⁷⁵ As we have seen, however, there is good reason to think that Law misreads Locke, and we might now wonder whether Law would support Locke as I have interpreted him here. In addition Hume denies that persons are substances, and Collins is a committed materialist. It doesn't look like either of these commitments are in keeping with what we have learned about Locke in this project.

That being said, Locke does claim that our ideas of relations are akin to labels we place on the world, and the idea we call "identity" is an idea of a relation. This sounds a lot like what Hume says about causation, and may be part of what would incline one to claim that Hume takes Locke's theory of personal identity to its logical ends. Though Locke thinks persons are substances we may wonder whether Locke would agree—to some degree—that persons are fictions, given that it looks like identity—to some degree—is. I happen to think that he wouldn't, but I need to further consider Locke on relations and further investigate Hume's discussion of persons to come to a considered position on the matter.

¹⁷⁵ I say this because Hume's discussion of identity follows Locke's almost exactly (see p. 257 of the *Treatise*, Selby-Bigge). Hume refers to the English debate over personal identity (p. 259) and Hume also mentions that he agrees that personal identity arises from consciousness, and consciousness is just perception. But this is what (at least in part) leads Hume to his skepticism about the self (Appendix, p. 635). In following Locke's lead, Hume ends up with his own view (and denies exactly what it looks like Locke asserts: that we have intuitive knowledge of a persisting self). He says, "Most philosophers seem inclin'd to think, that personal identity *arises* from consciousness; and consciousness is nothing but a reflected thought or perception. The present philosophy, therefore, has so far a promising aspect. But all my hopes vanish, when I come to explain the principles, that unite our successive perceptions in our thought or consciousness. I cannot discover any theory, which gives me satisfaction on this head. In short, there are two principles, which I cannot render consistent; nor is it in my power to renounce either of them, viz. *that all our distinct perceptions are distinct existences*, and *that the mind never perceives any real connexion among distinct existences*. Did our perceptions either inhere in something simple and individual, or did the mind perceive some real connexion among them, there wou'd be no difficulty in the case. For my part, I must plead the privilege of a skeptic" (p. 636). Martin and Barresi take Hume to be following in Locke's footsteps as well: "William Hazlitt's (1778–1830) first work ... was the culmination of a kind of perspective on personal identity that had begun with Locke and been developed by Collins, Hume, Priestley, and Cooper" (*The Rise and Fall of the Soul and Self*, p. 163). (Interestingly, Hazlitt is an early modern precursor to David Parfit, and intriguing questions arise about Hazlitt as well.)

Regarding Collins, it's important to note that Locke did have a close relationship with him (Martin and Barresi, 2000). Moreover, there is evidence that Locke likely endorsed Collins' picture of persons.¹⁷⁶ We may take this as evidence for Locke's considered stance on the substance dualism debate. That is, while Locke remains agnostic about substance dualism in the *Essay* and his correspondence with Stillingfleet, we could think Locke comes out as a materialist when he endorses Collins. In Collins' correspondence with Samuel Clarke, Clarke claims that what Collins says about personal identity therein departs significantly from his previous commitments, however (Clarke, 1738, p. 850; Uzgalis, 2011). Importantly, the correspondence between Clarke and Collins takes place after Locke's death. It thus may be the case that what Locke saw of Collins and Collins' considered materialist view are not one and the same. Determining this will require a more thorough investigation of how Collins' theory of personal identity developed and changed, the nature and timing of Locke's interaction with Collins and the Clarke/Collins correspondence, however.¹⁷⁷

In the Clarke/Collins correspondence it is clear that while Collins is a committed materialist, Clarke is a die-hard substance dualist. Moreover, while Clarke fancies himself a Cartesian, it looks like some of what Clarke says in his correspondence with Collins commits him to a view that entails substratum.¹⁷⁸ Determining how far from Locke Collins strays and the extent to which Clarke's objections actually target Locke will thus take a careful reading of the

¹⁷⁶ This is because Locke claimed he approved of Collins' overall approach and method (Uzgalis, 2011, Introduction). "During the last year of his life, Locke remarked to a third party that he regarded Collins as such a philosophically amiable companion that he numbered his own days by the length of his friendship with Collins. Toward the end of his life, Locke wrote to Collins that he regarded him as the one who would extend Locke's own work into the future (Locke 1823: v. 10, 271)" (Martin and Barresi, 2000, p. 52).

¹⁷⁷ Importantly Collins ends up denying that persons persist over time (which leads us to the questions similar to those I asked about Hume above). It should also be noted that Martin and Barresi attribute a mode view to Collins. Certainly these are issues worth exploring.

¹⁷⁸ This is important because Descartes does not endorse a substratum conception of substance.

correspondence and Collins' and Clarke's other works. It's only then that we can we can understand how Collins' and Clarke's conceptions of "substance" inform their theories of personal identity and where Locke fits in the debate between them. It's to these issues that I will turn my attention next.

FINIS.

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