

# Science, Religion, and the Rise of Biblical Criticism

with James C. Ungureanu, "Introduction to the Symposium on Science, Religion, and the Rise of Biblical Criticism"; Paul C. H. Lim, "Atheism, Atoms, and the Activity of God: Science and Religion in Early Boyle Lectures, 1692–1720"; Diego Lucci, "The Biblical Roots of Locke's Theory of Personal Identity"; Jon W. Thompson, "The Naturalization of Scriptural Reason in Seventeenth Century Epistemology"; James C. Ungureanu, "From Divine Oracles to the Higher Criticism"; Andrew D. White and the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom"; Nathan Bossoh, "Scientific Uniformity or 'Natural' Divine Action: Shifting the Boundaries of Law in the Nineteenth Century"; Stuart Mathieson, "The Victoria Institute, Biblical Criticism, and The Fundamentals"; and Samuel Loncar, "Science and Religion: An Origins Story."

## THE BIBLICAL ROOTS OF LOCKE'S THEORY OF PERSONAL IDENTITY

by Diego Lucci

*Abstract.* Locke's consciousness-based theory of personal identity resulted not only from his agnosticism on substance, but also from his biblical theology. This theory was intended to complement and sustain Locke's moral and theological commitments to a system of otherworldly rewards and sanctions as revealed in Scripture. Moreover, he inferred mortalist ideas from the Bible, rejecting the resurrection of the same body and maintaining that the soul dies at physical death and will be resurrected by divine miracle. Accordingly, personal identity is neither in the soul, nor in the body, nor in a union of soul and body. To Locke, personal identity is in consciousness, which, extending "backwards to any past Action or Thought," enables the self, both in this life and upon resurrection for the Last Judgment, to recognize that "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 that Action was done" (*Essay* II.xxvii.9).

*Keywords:* Bible; consciousness; last judgment; John Locke; morality; mortalism; personal identity; resurrection; Socinianism; soul

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### INTRODUCTION

When revising *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* for its second edition, which appeared in 1694, Locke added a new chapter—*Essay*

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II.xxvii, “Of Identity and Diversity”—in which he offered a nonsubstantialist, consciousness-based account of personal identity. It is widely believed that Locke’s theory of personal identity resulted from his intention to clarify the *principium individuationis* in accordance with his way of ideas, which entails an agnostic stance on the ontological constitution of substances, including thinking substances or souls. However, Locke’s theory of personal identity was also intended to complement and sustain his moral and theological commitments to a system of otherworldly rewards and sanctions (Weinberg 2011, 398; Boeker 2014., 242; Lucci 2021, 106–33). And, since Locke’s views on divine judgment and the afterlife were grounded in his reading of Scripture, his biblical theology also conditioned his notion of personal identity.

In *The Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695) and other writings on religion, Locke inferred from Scripture that salvation is a matter of personal responsibility, because the pursuit of salvation requires both faith and works. Accordingly, he rejected predestination, denied original sin, and eschewed the satisfaction theory of atonement. He held a moralist soteriology that, in many respects, echoed the views on salvation expressed by the anti-Trinitarian and anti-Calvinist Italian scholar Faustus Socinus and his mostly Polish and German disciples and, also, by the followers of the anti-Calvinist Dutch theologian Jacob Arminius. Locke’s religious thought, like Socinianism and Arminianism, was part of the irenicist and moralist Protestant tradition of the “way of fundamentals.” Locke regarded the fundamentals of Christianity—repentance for sin, obedience to the divine moral law, and faith in Jesus the Messiah (which entails belief in otherworldly rewards and sanctions and hope in God’s mercy)—as crucial to the achievement of eternal life. Therefore, he described “persons” as subjects of accountability, conscious of their actions and able to assess the moral value of their actions. To Locke, consciousness always accompanies thinking and is presupposed to one’s understanding of and repentance for their misdeeds during their earthly existence. Accordingly, consciousness is essential to comprehending the reasons behind divine punishment, or divine forgiveness and reward, at the Last Judgment, regardless of the substance in which thinking takes place. Locke, indeed, maintained that “whether it be the same Identical Substance, which always thinks in the same *Person*, [...] matters not at all” (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.10, 336).

Furthermore, Locke expressed mortalist views in the *Reasonableness*, in the unfinished *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St Paul*, and in various manuscripts, most of which he wrote in preparation of these books. His reading of 1 Corinthians 15 and other biblical texts, particularly Pauline epistles, led him to conclude that the soul dies with the body and will be resurrected by divine miracle for the Last Judgment, when the righteous will be admitted to eternal life while the wicked will experience a second, final death. Moreover, he believed in the resurrection of the dead,

but not of their “frail, mortal bodies,” which, he argued, will be replaced by incorruptible, spiritual bodies at the resurrection. Locke’s account of the resurrection of the dead implicitly denies the natural immortality of the soul and, along with his agnosticism on the ontological constitution of thinking substances, implies that personal identity is neither in the soul, nor in the body, nor in a union of soul and body. Conversely, according to Locke, consciousness provides a sort of (nontemporal) continuity to the self not only in this life, but also between the end of one’s earthly existence and one’s resurrection for the Last Judgment.

This article reassesses the impact of Locke’s biblical theology on his notion of personal identity. The article offers a brief explanation of Locke’s consciousness-based theory of personal identity and clarifies the connections between his nonsubstantialist account of personhood and his agnosticism on substance. It is worth noting that several aspects of Locke’s theory of personal identity are still issues for debate. Such aspects include the ontological status of Lockean persons (which have been variously interpreted as modes or substances), the metaphysical constitution of the unifying component of consciousness, the role of appropriation in making personal identity, and whether the nature of thinking substances is simply *unknown* or *unknowable* to us. In this article, however, I abstain from discussing these controversial issues, which would be irrelevant to my point regarding the role that Locke’s religious concerns and views played in his rethinking of personhood. I rather focus on the moral and soteriological reasons behind Locke’s consciousness-based theory of personal identity, highlighting the necessity of consciousness to one’s understanding, recollection, and evaluation of their deeds. Finally, I concentrate on Locke’s mortalism, with an emphasis on its biblical grounds and its influence on Locke’s approach to personal identity. I consider Locke’s mortalist ideas in the context of the emergence of mortalist theories in the post-Reformation era. In this regard, I point out the remarkable similarities between Locke’s mortalism and the views on the soul’s death, the resurrection of the dead, and the Last Judgment expressed by seventeenth-century Socinians, such as Johann Crell, Jonas Schlichting, and the editors of the final, 1680 Latin version of the *Racovian Catechism*—namely, Socinus’s grandson Andrzej Wiszowaty and great-grandson Benedykt Wiszowaty.

Locke’s mortalism has raised the interest of several scholars (Wainwright 1987, 51–56; Almond 1994, 129–30, 140–43; Marshall 1994, 399–401; Higgins-Biddle 1999, cxxi–cxxii; Marshall 2000, 159–61; Snobelen 2001, 114–20; Ball 2008, 120–26; Giuntini 2015, 239–85; Jolley 2015, 99–115; Simonutti 2019; Lucci 2021, 107–17). However, there is still a need to reassess the role that his mortalist ideas had in his reconsideration of personal identity. Moreover, Locke’s agnosticism on substance, ambiguity on the immateriality or materiality of the human soul, rethinking of personal identity in nonsubstantialist terms, and

mortalist views provoked a long and heated debate involving many prominent intellectuals, including, among others, the latitudinarian Bishop Edward Stillingfleet, the German philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz, and the Calvinistic divine John Edwards. Some of Locke's critics depicted his views on these matters as inconsistent with traditional scholastic language and as promoting anti-Trinitarianism, Socinianism, Hobbism, Spinozism, materialism, and even immorality. This debate has received significant attention in historiography on Locke (Sell 1997, 239–67; Marshall 2000, 156–61; Giuntini 2015, 299–331; Lucci 2021, 115–17, 159–73). However, this debate is beyond the scope of this article, which aims at reevaluating the impact of Locke's biblical theology, and hence of his soteriological views and mortalist ideas, on his theory of personal identity.

#### LOCKE'S AGNOSTICISM ON SUBSTANCE AND HIS CONSCIOUSNESS-BASED ACCOUNT OF PERSONAL IDENTITY

Locke decided to expound his theory of personal identity when, in a letter dated March 2, 1693, his friend William Molyneux encouraged him to clarify his position on the *principium individuationis* (principle of individuation) (Locke 1979–1989–1989, 4:647–52). The *principium individuationis* defines “what it is that makes an individual the individual it is and distinguishes it from all other individuals of the same kind” (Thiel 2000, 217–18). Locke concentrated on this subject in the second edition of *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, published in 1694, precisely in *Essay* II.xxvii, “Of Identity and Diversity.” In this chapter, Locke paid attention to the principle of individuation of persons and to personal identity, formulating a nonsubstantialist account of personhood. Thus, he diverged from the traditional Christian understanding of these concepts, which was based on Boethius's definition of “person” as an “individual substance of a rational nature” (Boethius 1978, 85). The most obvious reason behind Locke's rejection of a substantialist approach to personhood was his agnosticism on substance. To Locke, substance is an unknown support, or “substratum,” of ideas that are “conveyed in by the Senses, as they are found in exterior things, or by reflection on [the mind's] own operations,” and that cannot “subsist by themselves” (Locke 1975, II.xxiii.1, 295). Locke added that “we have no clear, or distinct *Idea* of that *thing* we suppose a Support” (Locke 1975, II.xxiii.4, 297). As regards our own thinking, we are aware of our thoughts and we have an idea of our thinking, which is an operation of the mind; but we have no clear and distinct idea of the underlying entity in which our thinking takes place and of its ontological constitution—whether it is material or immaterial (Locke 1975, IV.iii.6, 539–43; Boeker 2017, 412). Thus, we have no clear and distinct idea of a thinking substance or soul. Locke's agnosticism on the

immateriality or materiality of the soul emerges not only from the *Essay*, but also from two manuscripts he wrote at different times. In a journal entry dated February 20, 1682, he questioned the compatibility between two attributes commonly ascribed to the soul, namely, (natural) immortality and immateriality, because he thought there could be immortality only in the presence of sensibility (Locke 1936, 121–23). Later, in the entries on this subject in the manuscript “Adversaria Theologica,” composed in the mid-1690s, he manifested an ambiguous or undecided position as he endorsed contrasting arguments (Locke 2002, 28–30). After quoting several biblical verses affirming the distinction between body and soul (i.e., 2 Corinthians 12:2, Matthew 10:28, Ecclesiastes 12:7, Luke 13:46, and Acts 7:59, KJV), he endorsed the following argument supporting the view that the soul is immaterial: “We cannot conceive one material atom to think nor any Systeme of Atoms or particles to think” (Locke 2002, 28). But he also endorsed an argument compatible with the hypothesis of the materiality of the soul: “We can conceive noe movable substance without extension, for what is not extended is nowhere. i e is not. From this & the opposite view we must conclude there is something in the nature of Spirits or thinking beings which we cannot conceive” (Locke 2002, 30).

Keeping to his agnosticism on the ontological constitution of thinking substances, in *Essay* II.xxvii, Locke distinguished the *principium individuationis* as an ontological notion from identity as an epistemic notion. To Locke, the *principium individuationis* is “Existence it self, which determines a Being of any sort to a particular time and place incommunicable to two Beings of the same kind” (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.3, 330). Conversely, identity is an epistemic notion in that, as Udo Thiel has noted, to Locke “our concepts determine what is required for the identity of objects over time. [...] According to Locke, then, what constitutes the identity of a being through time is the continued fulfilment of those requirements which are specified by that abstract idea under which we consider the being: there can be no satisfactory treatment of identity through time independently of our abstract ideas of those things whose identity is in question” (Thiel 2011, 106).

Locke’s view of the identity of “man” is connected to his description of the identity of living creatures as depending on the continued organization of a common life—namely, on the continued organization of all their parts in a way fit to convey life to the whole creature. Accordingly, the *principium individuationis* of a living creature is the existence of an organized, common life (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.3–5, 330–31). This is also true for “man,” since human beings are living creatures. Locke, indeed, stated that “the Identity of the same *Man* consists [...] 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” (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.6, 331–32). He explained that “tis not the *Idea* of a thinking or

rational Being alone, that makes the *Idea* of a *Man* in most Peoples Sense; but of a *Body* so and so shaped joined to it” (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.8, 335). Locke, nevertheless, distinguished between “man” and “person.” He argued that personal identity is in “consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking”:

For 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 that Action was done. (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.9, 335)

To Locke, consciousness (which, extending “backwards to any past Action or Thought,” also enables the recollection of past events) makes personal identity. Consciousness also determines the *principium individuationis* of a person, which defines what it is that makes an individual person the individual person this person is and that, therefore, distinguishes an individual person from all other individual persons. In *Essay* II.i, Locke described “consciousness” as “the perception of what passes in a Man’s own mind” (Locke 1975, II.i.19, 115). Therefore, as Shelley Weinberg has explained, to Locke consciousness “is a non-evaluative self-referential form of awareness internal to all perceptions of ideas. It is the perception that *I am perceiving* an idea, or the perception of *myself as perceiving* an idea. [...] Perceptions of ideas, for Locke, are complex mental states in which we are conscious of more than just the idea perceived. In any perception of an idea, there is, at the very least, an act of perception, an idea perceived, and consciousness (that *I am perceiving*)” (Weinberg 2016, xi). To Locke, the fact of being conscious denotes an immediate awareness, which is an inherent part of all acts of thinking. In the *Essay*, however, the term “consciousness” denotes two different senses, as Weinberg has observed: “Locke seems to see consciousness as (1) *a mental state inseparable from an act of perception by means of which we are aware of ourselves as perceiving*, and (2) *the ongoing self we are aware of in these conscious states*” (Weinberg 2016, 153). The first sense of consciousness signifies a momentary psychological state based on a momentary subjective experience, while the second sense denotes the objective fact of the diachronic existence of a self “by the same consciousness” (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.10, 336, II.xxvii.21, 343, II.xxvii.25, 345). To Locke, consciousness, despite its temporal interruptions, “unites Existences, and Actions, very remote in time, into the same Person, as well as it does the Existence and Actions of the immediately preceding moment” (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.16, 340). Thus, consciousness alone “makes the same *Person*, and constitutes this inseparable *self*” (Locke

1975, II.xxvii.17, 341), regardless of the substance or substances to which consciousness is annexed:

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. For as far as any intelligent Being can repeat the *Idea* of any past Action with the same consciousness it had of it at first, and with the same consciousness it has of any present Action; so far it is the same *personal self*. For it is by the consciousness it has of its present Thoughts and Actions, that it is *self* to it *self* now, and so will be the same *self* as far as the same consciousness can extend to Actions past or to come. (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.10, 336)

The fact that consciousness enables an “intelligent Being” to “repeat the *Idea* of any past Action with the same consciousness it had of it at first,” and to consider itself as “the same *personal self*” that committed those past actions, has important moral implications. Locke’s consciousness-based theory of personal identity was, indeed, also inspired by his intention to provide reasons to be moral. The moral elements of Locke’s account of personhood are manifest in his considerations on the continuity of personal identity, and hence of moral accountability, “by the same consciousness”:

This every intelligent Being, sensible of Happiness or Misery, must grant, that there is something that is *himself*, that he is concerned for, and would have happy; that this *self* has existed in a continued Duration more than one instant, and therefore ‘tis possible may exist, as it has done, Months and Years to come, without any certain bounds to be set to its duration; and may be the same *self*; by the same consciousness, continued on for the future. And thus, by this consciousness, he finds himself to be the *same self* which did such or such an Action some Years since, by which he comes to be happy or miserable now. (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.25, 345–46)

Locke elaborated on the notion of person as a subject of accountability in *Essay* II.xxvii.26, where he described the term “person” as “a Forensick Term appropriating Actions and their Merit; and so belongs only to intelligent Agents capable of a Law, and Happiness and Misery. This personality extends it *self* beyond present Existence to what is past, only by consciousness, whereby it becomes concerned and accountable, owns and imputes to it *self* past Actions, just upon the same ground, and for the same reason, as it does the present” (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.26, 346). The moral aspects of the Lockean notion of “person” also emerge from *Essay* II.xxvii.9, in which Locke characterized a “person” as “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” (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.9, 335). All elements of this definition of “person” denote the moral implications of Locke’s theory of personal identity. If utilized properly, reason actually leads a thinking, intelligent being to distinguish between what is moral

and what is immoral. Moreover, reflection is necessary to realizing that one has freedom, which “consists in a Power to do, or not to do; to do, or forbear doing as we *will*” (Locke 1975, II.xxi.56, 270). Reflection is, indeed, essential to comprehending that one has the power to suspend the carrying out of some action, until investigation has concluded whether this action is consistent with one’s true happiness. And Locke thought that true happiness is matched by morality, for he compared the pursuit of true happiness to “the highest perfection of intellectual nature” (Locke 1975, II.xxi.51, 266). He insisted on keeping in mind “the true intrinsick good or ill, that is in things,” so as to act in agreement with “the eternal Law and Nature of things [which] must not be alter’d” and, thus, so as to comply with “the Will and Power of the Law-maker”—in this case, God—who has the power to reward and punish (Locke 1975, II.xxi.53, 268, II.xxi.56, 271, II.xxviii.5, 351). Furthermore, without the ability to consider “it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places,” a thinking intelligent being could neither act morally, nor understand the justness of punishment or reward. In fact, one is punished or rewarded for what one has done at some other time and, in most cases, in some other place. Therefore, one’s ability to consider oneself as the same thinking intelligent being at different times and places is indispensable to make the connection between crime and punishment. Accordingly, “in this *personal Identity* is founded all the Right and Justice of Reward and Punishment” (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.18, 341).

#### MORAL ACCOUNTABILITY AND DIVINE JUDGMENT

The ability to make the connection between crime and punishment is not only crucial in human justice, but will also play a critical role on Judgment Day. Locke believed in an afterlife with reward and punishment, which he regarded as a truth *above reason* revealed in Scripture. In *Essay* IV.xviii.7, he talked of the fact “that the dead shall rise, and live again” as “being beyond the discovery of reason” and, hence, as purely a matter of faith (Locke 1975, IV.xviii.7, 694). He thought that “it still belongs to *Reason*, to judge of the Truth of [a proposition’s] being a revelation, and of the signification of the Words, wherein it is delivered” (Locke 1975, IV.xviii.8, 694). By this, however, he did “not mean, that we must consult Reason, and examine whether a Proposition revealed from God can be made out by natural Principles, and if it cannot, that then we may reject it; But consult it we must, and by it examine, whether it be a *Revelation* from God or no: And if *Reason* finds it to be revealed from God, *Reason* then declares for it, as much as for any other Truth, and makes it one of her Dictates” (Locke 1975, IV.xix.14, 704). In fact, to Locke “faith is not a mode of knowledge. It consists in believing things on the basis of one’s belief that they have been revealed by God rather than on the basis of the premises of some



demonstration” (Wolterstorff 1994, 190). Locke described faith as assent to *probable* matters of fact: “For where the Principles of Reason have not evidenced a Proposition to be certainly true or false, there clear *Revelation*, as another Principle of Truth, and Ground of Assent, may determine; and so it may be Matter of *Faith*, and be also above *Reason*. Because *Reason*, in that particular Matter, being able to reach no higher than Probability, *Faith* gave the Determination, where *Reason* came short; and *Revelation* discovered on which side the Truth lay” (Locke 1975, IV.xviii.9, 695). To Locke, scriptural revelation complements and sustains natural reason, since both Scripture and reason are God-given: “*Reason* is natural *Revelation*, whereby the eternal Father of Light, and Fountain of all Knowledge communicates to Mankind that portion of Truth, which he has laid within the reach of their natural Faculties: *Revelation* is natural *Reason* enlarged by a new set of Discoveries communicated by God immediately, which *Reason* vouches the Truth of, by the Testimony and Proofs it gives, that they come from God” (Locke 1975, IV.xix.4, 698). Therefore, Locke relied on biblical revelation to substantiate his belief in an afterlife with reward and punishment, as he did, referring to Romans 2:6–9, in *Essay* II.xxi.60:

Change but a Man’s view of these things [i.e. earthly desires and enjoyments]; let him see, that Virtue and Religion are necessary to his Happiness; let him look into the future State of Bliss or Misery, and see there God the righteous Judge, ready to *render to every Man according to his Deeds; To them who by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for Glory, and Honour, and Immortality, Eternal Life; but unto every Soul that doth Evil, Indignation and Wrath, Tribulation and Anguish*. To him, I say, who hath a prospect of the different State of perfect Happiness or Misery, that attends all Men after this Life, depending on their Behaviour here, the measures of Good and Evil, that govern his choice, are mightily changed. For since nothing of Pleasure and Pain in this Life, can bear any proportion to the endless Happiness, or exquisite Misery of an immortal Soul hereafter, Actions in his Power will have their preference, not according to the transient Pleasure, or Pain that accompanies, or follows them here; but as they serve to secure that perfect durable Happiness hereafter. (Locke 1975, II.xxi.60, 273–74)

Locke emphasized the role of individual responsibility in the pursuit of salvation not only in the *Essay*, but also in *The Reasonableness of Christianity* and other theological writings. His moralist soteriology entails a denial of original sin (Spellman 1988; Artis 2012; Lucci 2021, 96–105). In the *Reasonableness*, he blamed “some Men [who] would have all *Adam’s* Posterity doomed to Eternal Infinite Punishment for the Transgression of *Adam*, whom Millions had never heard of, and no one had authorized to transact for him, or be his Representative” (Locke 1999, 5). Moreover, in two manuscripts composed a couple of years before the *Reasonableness* and titled “*Peccatum originale*” (1692) and “*Homo ante et post lapsum*” (1693), Locke objected to the view that Adam’s sin was imputed to his posterity, he denied the fallen condition of humankind, and he denounced the

doctrine of original sin as unreasonable and incompatible with God's goodness and justice (Locke 2002, 229–31). He rejected original sin in *Essay* II.xxvii, too, particularly when affirming the necessity of consciousness to the recollection of past events on Judgment Day. In *Essay* II.xxvii.22, he maintained that “in the great Day, wherein the Secrets of all Hearts shall be laid open, it may be reasonable to think, no one shall be made to answer for what he knows nothing of; but shall receive his Doom, his Conscience accusing or excusing him” (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.22, 344). In this passage, Locke used a formula borrowed from 1 Corinthians 14:25 (“And thus are the secrets of his heart made manifest [...],” KJV), which he also referred to in *Essay* II.xxvii.26: “The Apostle tells us, that at the Great Day, when every one shall receive according to his doings, the secrets of all Hearts shall be laid open” (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.26, 347). In the same paragraph, Locke also wrote that on Judgment Day “the Sentence shall be justified by the consciousness all Persons shall have, that they *themselves* in what Bodies soever they appear, or what Substances soever that consciousness adheres to, are the *same*, that committed those Actions, and deserve that Punishment for them” (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.26, 347). And, when writing these words, he referred to 2 Corinthians 5:10 (“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad,” KJV). Locke's denial of original sin is matched by his dislike of the satisfaction theory of atonement, according to which Christ suffered death on the cross as a substitute for human sin, thus satisfying God due to his infinite merit. Locke disregarded this theory in the *Reasonableness*. Later, in the *Second Vindication* of this book, he defined it as a “disputed” doctrine and added that “satisfaction” was “a term not used by the Holy Ghost in the Scripture, and very variously explained by those that do use it” (Locke 2012, 227). As the entry “Redemptio & Ransom” in “Adversaria Theologica” and the manuscript “Redemption, Death” (c.1697) demonstrate, Locke preferred the Arminians' governmental theory of atonement, according to which God offered Christ's death as a public display of how seriously he takes sin, in order to uphold his moral government of the world (Locke 1999, 205–8; Locke 2002, 33). This theory, first formulated by Hugo Grotius and then refined by Locke's friend Philipp van Limborch, well matched Locke's stress on individual responsibility in the pursuit of salvation (Grotius 1617, 56–157; Limborch 1686, 224–41, 264–73). Locke, indeed, believed that everyone ought to achieve salvation through their works and faith during their earthly life, and not thanks to Christ's sacrificial death. Briefly, Locke's persuasion that on Judgment Day “no one shall be made to answer for what he knows nothing of” and “every one shall receive according to his doings”—a persuasion he expressed, citing Paul's epistles to the Corinthians, when explaining personal identity in *Essay* II.xxvii—is inconsistent with the idea that human beings are to be held

accountable for another person's deeds and, hence, for Adam's sin. Locke's position on this matter is also inconsistent with a view of Christ as a substitute for human sin. To Locke, the pursuit of salvation is a matter of personal responsibility. In this respect, Locke's views on personhood and his Scripture-based soteriology intertwine.

Locke expounded his soteriology in *The Reasonableness of Christianity*, in which he inferred from Scripture the fundamentals of the Christian religion, that is, repentance for sin, obedience to the divine moral law, and faith in Jesus the Messiah. Based on several passages from the Gospels of Matthew and Luke and the Acts of the Apostles, Locke argued that repentance is "not only a sorrow for sins past, but (what is a Natural consequence of such sorrow, if it be real) a turning from them, into a new and contrary Life," entailing "a sincere Resolution and Endeavour, to the utmost of our power, to conform all our Actions to the Law of God" (Locke 1999, 111–12). One's repentance for one's past misdeeds, along with one's sincere and constant effort to lead a righteous life, does not cancel such misdeeds and, thus, does not make them less deserving of punishment. However, Locke argued that one's salvation depends not only on one's repentance for sin and commitment to obey the divine moral law, but also on one's faith and conscientious study of Scripture. To Locke, acceptance of the three fundamentals, which are plainly revealed in the Bible, binds one to Scripture as a whole, which the faithful have to study diligently. Locke tolerated mistakes in the interpretation of biblical passages concerning nonfundamental issues, as long as such mistakes were made in bona fide and did not lead to enmity with other believers. He even argued that error on nonfundamentals, when held after sincere search by a Christian, does not hinder salvation. But he considered acceptance of the three fundamentals crucial to conduct a Christian life and pursue salvation (Locke 1999, 168–71). Locke deemed it critical to rely on biblical revelation in matters of morality and salvation because, although he considered the Law of Nature as divinely given and, hence, eternally valid, universally binding, and consonant with natural reason, he thought that "humane reason unassisted, failed Men in its great and Proper business of *Morality*. It never from unquestionable Principles, by clear deductions, made out an entire body of the *Law of Nature*" (Locke 1999, 148–50). Given the failure of unassisted reason to comprehend the Law of Nature in its entirety, God expressly reaffirmed the universal and eternal Law of Nature through the covenant of works, establishing the Law of Moses. This new law, revealed in the Old Testament and hence easily accessible, consisted of two parts—ritual prescriptions, having "a limited and only temporary Obligation," and moral precepts (i.e., "the Law of Works") identical to the Law of Nature and, thus, universally and eternally valid. Nevertheless, the Law of Moses, like the Law of Nature, was excessively rigorous, because it demanded perfect obedience, and offered no incentive to act morally.

Therefore, a new covenant—the covenant of grace or covenant of faith—was needed. With this new covenant, Christ established the Law of Faith, restoring the God-given, inherently rational, universally binding, and eternally valid Law of Nature in its entirety and complementing it with new revealed truths, such as the assurance of otherworldly rewards and sanctions and the promise of God’s mercy for the repentant faithful who, in their life, strive to obey the divine moral law.

According to Locke, the prospect of reward and punishment in the afterlife gave human beings a powerful incentive to behave morally, although he always regarded obedience to the divinely-given Law of Nature as a duty (Locke 1999, 16–25, 110–12, 132). To Locke, belief in God, which can be reached through the operation of natural reason, entails that we owe obedience to God’s law because we are the workmanship, servants, and property of the divine creator and legislator and are “sent into the World by his order, and about his business” (Locke 1975, IV.iii.18, 549, IV.xii.11, 646; Locke 1988, 271). Nevertheless, whereas Locke argued that the Law of Faith had reaffirmed the Law of Nature and had complemented it with a strong incentive to moral conduct, he did not claim that accepting the Law of Faith and believing in otherworldly rewards and sanctions necessarily and unfailingly leads to act morally. He admitted that even those who believe in an afterlife with reward and punishment are still liable to commit evil deeds, due to the imperfection and weakness of human nature (Locke 1975, II.xxi.60–73, 273–87, II.xxviii.12, 356–57; Spellman 1988, 57; Sell 1997, 230; Locke 1999, 19, 120, 130; Lucci 2021, 92). Therefore, he followed the Socinians in emphasizing Christ’s promise of God’s forgiveness of the repentant faithful. In *De Jesus Christo Servatore* (1594), Socinus described God as merciful and omnipotent and, thus, not bound by any law. Moreover, according to Socinus, God knows whether one is actually repentant and sincerely willing to obey the divine law. Thus, Socinus and his followers argued that God could waive his right to punishment and forgive the repentant faithful despite their sins—even though these sins are still deserving of punishment (Mortimer 2012, 76–81; Lucci 2021, 92–93). Following the Socinians, in the *Reasonableness*, Locke maintained that Christ “did not expect [...] a Perfect Obedience void of slips and falls: He knew our Make, and the weakness of our Constitution too well, and was sent with a Supply for that Defect” (Locke 1999, 120). This supply is “Faith [which] is allowed to supply the defect of full Obedience; and so the Believers are admitted to Life and Immortality as if they were Righteous” (Locke 1999, 19).

Locke, however, did not believe in salvation by faith alone. In Locke’s soteriology, the justifying faith includes moral works, although failure to perfectly abide by the divine moral law is compensated for by faith. This means that a sincere effort to obey God’s moral law is still required of Christians to achieve salvation, but one’s faith, along with one’s

repentance for one's sins (which are inevitable, given human weakness and fallibility), will also be taken into account on Judgment Day (Wallace 1984, 53–56; Locke 1999, 130; Lucci 2021, 92–96, 128–33). Therefore, the repentant faithful, who in their life have endeavored to obey the divine moral law, will receive “the Pardon and Forgiveness of Sins and Salvation,” despite their sins being still deserving of punishment (Locke 1999, 133). Conversely, the unrepentant and the unfaithful will suffer divine punishment because, on Judgment Day, everyone “shall receive his Doom, his Conscience accusing or excusing him” (Locke 1975, II.xxvii.22, 344). Here, by “conscience” Locke means, I believe, the same thing he does in *Essay* I.iii.7–9, where he defines conscience as “our own Opinion or Judgment of the Moral Rectitude or Pravity of our own Actions” (Locke 1975, I.iii.8, 70). What Locke means by “opinion or judgment” is a moral assessment of our actions that, if matched by a proper consideration of the divine moral law, is accompanied by a sound judgment of their righteousness or wrongness and, hence, by feelings of confidence and serenity in the case of good works, or by remorse in the case of misdeeds (Locke 1975, I.iii.7–9, 69–72). Therefore, conscience differs from consciousness, which is *nonevaluative* awareness. However, one's consciousness of one's actions is presupposed to one's moral evaluation of such actions and, hence, to repentance and the ensuing commitment to obey the divine moral law. Likewise, on Judgment Day consciousness, always accompanying thinking and extending “backwards to any past Action or Thought” will be essential to each person's proper understanding of divine punishment or forgiveness and reward. At the Last Judgment, consciousness will, indeed, enable each resurrected “thinking intelligent being” to “consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing” as in earthly life.

#### THE SOUL'S DEATH AND THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

Another reason why Locke did not locate personal identity in the soul was that he maintained Scripture-based mortalist ideas. He argued that the soul dies with the body and will be resurrected *by divine miracle* for the Last Judgment. Thus, he expressed a position in line with mortalism, which is the view that the soul dies at physical death or, at least, is not comprehending during the time between bodily death and resurrection. Mortalist ideas were quite common among Christians in the early centuries of Christianity, particularly in the East, but were subsequently rejected by several theologians, such as John of Damascus in the eighth century and Pope Benedict XII in the fourteenth century, before reemerging after the Reformation. Mortalism, however, is inconsistent with the views on eschatological judgment maintained by the major Christian churches, which generally uphold belief in the natural immortality of the soul. In Western Christianity, Roman Catholics believe that, at physical death, the

soul undergoes particular judgment and, depending upon its state, goes to Heaven, Purgatory, or Hell (*New Catholic Encyclopedia* 2003, 5:770). While all souls in Purgatory will eventually reach Heaven, souls in Hell will be there eternally. According to Catholics, the Last Judgment will take place at the time of Christ's Second Coming and the general resurrection of the dead, when everyone will be judged for their faith and works and, having been reunited to their bodies, will also feel physical pleasure or pain. As regards Protestant theological traditions, Calvin maintained that the souls of the dead are conscious, and are in either bliss or torment, while awaiting the Last Judgment (Burns 1972, 19–22). Thus, in the post-Reformation era, mortalist ideas were regarded as heretical not only in Roman Catholicism, but also in the Reformed tradition and other branches of Protestantism.

Mortalist ideas can be classified into three categories (Burns 1972, 2; Sugg 2013, 207). The mortalist view closest to natural immortality is known as psychopannychism. According to this theory, the soul sleeps, and is, therefore, unconscious although not “dead,” until its awakening on Judgment Day. While Luther upheld psychopannychism, other Reformers, such as Calvin and Bullinger, opposed it. Another kind of mortalism is thnetopsychism, which maintains that the soul dies at physical death and will be raised again, by divine miracle, for the Last Judgment. This form of mortalism spread among several radical Protestants of the early modern period, including, among others, Socinus and his disciples and other anti-Trinitarians, such as Michael Servetus, Simon Budny, John Biddle, and John Milton. Finally, the most extreme mortalist theory, annihilationism, regards the soul as permanently mortal. Some versions of thnetopsychism present annihilationist and conditionalist elements, in that they depict the soul as naturally mortal but affirm conditional immortality—namely, the view that the saved will eventually be granted immortality, while the unsaved cease to exist *permanently* either at physical death or upon the Last Judgment.

The reemergence of mortalist ideas in the post-Reformation era can be explained by the fact that some Protestants saw soul-sleep or soul-death as compatible with Protestant principles, such as the rejection of Purgatory and the opinion that the soul's otherworldly fate depends exclusively on God—not on ecclesiastical authorities or other human agencies or intercessions (Burns 1972, 9, 51; Ball 2008, 28, 44–49; Sugg 2013, 211). In England, the Forty-Two Articles of 1553 censured both psychopannychism and thnetopsychism, whereas the Thirty-Nine Articles of 1563–1571 did not expressly condemn mortalist ideas (Ball 2008, 59–61; Sugg 2013, 209). In the early modern period, however, the Church of England generally upheld belief in natural immortality and, hence, in the existence of an intermediate state between bodily death and the resurrection of the dead—a state in which the soul is conscious, and is

in either happiness or misery, while awaiting the resurrection of the body and the Last Judgment (Ball 2008, 55–61; Sugg 2013, 206–12). But mortalist views spread during the Civil War and Interregnum, particularly among heterodox figures, such as the physician Thomas Browne, the Leveller Richard Overton, the philosopher Thomas Hobbes, and the aforesaid Biddle and Milton, as well as sectarians like the Ranters and the Familists. It was mainly thanks to the development of medicine and anatomy and to Puritan Biblicism that mortalist ideas emerged in mid-seventeenth-century England. Thnetopsychists, such as Overton, Hobbes, and Milton, dismissed belief in natural immortality as unscriptural, since they referred to biblical verses supporting mortalism (e.g., Genesis 2:7 and Ecclesiastes 3:19, KJV). Moreover, they judged belief in natural immortality to be lacking any scientific basis (Sugg 2013, 215–22). As regards Ranters and Familists, their mortalist ideas were largely grounded in their mystical pantheism, maintaining that the soul, when returning to God, will be deprived of its individuality and absorbed into God's essence (Burns 1972, 74–87; Sugg 2013, 223).

Locke's father read Overton's *Mans Mortalitie* (1644) (Woolhouse 2007, 7). However, Locke formulated a sort of thnetopsychism extremely close to some Socinian authors' views on soul-death, although not to the position maintained by Socinus himself. While rejecting natural immortality, Socinus did not believe in the resurrection of the wicked to punishment. He argued that the punishment of the wicked is permanent annihilation at physical death and that only the righteous will be raised to eternal life. Thus, Socinus's thnetopsychism presented annihilationalist and conditionalist aspects. However, a different form of thnetopsychism with annihilationalist and conditionalist elements eventually prevailed among Socinus's followers in the seventeenth century. Socinians such as Johann Crell, Jonas Schlichting, and the editors of the final Latin version of the *Racovian Catechism* diverged from Socinus in that they believed in the resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked. They thought that, following Christ's Second Coming and the general resurrection of the dead, the saved will be admitted to eternal life, while the unsaved will experience a second, final death, after suffering terrible albeit brief torments (Williams 1980, 1:106–7, 1:202–4, 1:237, 1:326, 2:407, 2:416, 2:616). Locke's mortalism is identical to these Socinians' version of thnetopsychism. He thoroughly explained his mortalist views in the manuscript "Resurrectio et quae sequuntur," which he composed around 1699, when he was working on *A Paraphrase and Notes on the Epistles of St Paul*. These two writings denote many similarities in their analyses of Pauline passages concerning the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and the Last Judgment, particularly from 1 Corinthians 15 (Locke 1987, 1:246–56; Locke 2002, 232–37). Based on this and other Pauline texts, in "Resurrectio et quae sequuntur," Locke argued that, following the Second Coming of Christ, "all men by

the benefit of Christ shall be restored to life.” He added that the resurrection of “those that are his” will be followed by “the resurrection of the wicked,” which will take place “before our Saviour delivers up the Kingdom to his father, for then is the end.” He maintained that the wicked “shall not live forever” because “the wages of sin is death,” as is stated in Romans 6:23 (KJV), while “the reward of the righteous is everlasting life.” Therefore, upon the Last Judgment, there will be “life to the just, to believers, to the obedient; & death to the wicked & unbelievers.” Locke denied that, when Scripture talks of death as “the ultimate punishment & last estate to which the wicked must all come,” by “death” is meant “eternal life in torment.” In order to substantiate his point, he drew on various biblical passages, such as Galatians 6:8, which states that “he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting” (KJV). Locke argued that in this verse the terms “corruption & life everlasting are opposed” and that by corruption is meant “the dissolution & final destruction of a thing whereby it ceases to be.” Furthermore, when considering “the everlasting fire threatened by our saviour to the wicked” in Matthew 18:8 and 25:41–46 (KJV), Locke maintained that “everlasting in a true scripture sense may be said of that which endures as long as the subject it affects endures” and, thus, “the wicked shall die & be extinguished at last” (Locke 2002, 232–37).

Although Locke wrote his most comprehensive account of his mortalist views in a manuscript of the late 1690s, he already held mortalist ideas by the mid-1690s, when he composed *Essay* II.xxvii. This is proven by several passages concerning 1 Corinthians 15 and other biblical verses in *The Reasonableness of Christianity* and in several theological manuscripts of that period—mostly drafts of various sections of the *Reasonableness* (Locke 1999, 7–16, 104, 117, 198–205). As regards human mortality, Locke wrote in the *Reasonableness*: “By *Death* here I can understand nothing but a ceasing to be, the losing of all actions of Life and Sense. Such a Death came on *Adam*, and all his Posterity by his first Disobedience in Paradise, under which *Death* they should have lain for ever, had it not been for the Redemption by Jesus Christ” (Locke 1999, 8–9). In the *Reasonableness*, Locke also described resurrection and eternal life as made possible only by a divine miracle. Moreover, he stated that “Immortality and Bliss belong to the Righteous,” who will be “re-instated in an Happy Immortality,” while the wicked will suffer a “second Death” (Locke 1999, 12, 104, 117). In this respect, Locke gave in the *Reasonableness* the same explanation he later gave in “Resurrectio et quae sequuntur,” as he argued that, in Scripture, by “death” is meant literal termination—not “endless torment in Hell-fire” and “Eternal Life in Misery” (Locke 1999, 7). Based on 2 Thessalonians 1:9 (“Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power,” KJV), he observed



that “the state the unrighteous are at last destined to is a final cessation of life, *i.e.* of all sense perception and activity. [...] The punishment of those that know not God and obey not the gospel shall be *everlasting destruction*” (Locke 1999, 15). Briefly, although Locke never stated expressly that the human soul is naturally mortal, he argued that the resurrection of the dead will take place *only by divine miracle*, and he maintained that the unsaved will be *annihilated permanently* upon the Last Judgment. These ideas implicitly deny the *natural* immortality of the soul.

As regards the body in which the soul will be resurrected, Locke wrote in *Essay* II.xxvii that “we may be able without any difficulty to conceive, the same Person at the Resurrection, though in a Body not exactly in make or parts the same which he had here” (Locke 1975, *Essay*, II.xxvii.15, 340). Moreover, based on 1 Corinthians 15:54 (“So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory,” KJV), he stated in the *Reasonableness* that our “frail Mortal Bodies” will be changed into “Spiritual Immortal Bodies at the Resurrection,” and he mentioned the “Resurrection of the dead,” not of their bodies (Locke 1999, 115–16). He repeated that “the saints shall then have spiritual & immortal bodys” in “Resurrectio et quae sequuntur” (Locke 2002, 232), in which, drawing on 1 Corinthians 15, he explained: “We shall all be changed in the twinkling of an eye [...] Because this corruptible thing must put on incorruption & this mortal thing put on immortality. how? by putting off flesh & blood by an instantaneous change because [...] Flesh & blood cannot inherit the kingdom of god. [...] Men alive are flesh & blood, the dead in the graves are but the remains of corrupted flesh & blood. But flesh & blood can not inherit the kingdom of god, neither can corruption inherit incorruption i e immortality” (Locke 2002, 233). Locke’s use of the term “change” in this regard needs some clarification. In “Resurrectio et quae sequuntur,” Locke talked of the “putting off” of flesh and blood. Moreover, when discussing the resurrection of the dead with Bishop Stillingfleet in the late 1690s, he openly denied that “the resurrection of the same body [...] is an article of the Christian faith” (Locke 1824, 303). Therefore, when talking of “change” in regard to the body at the resurrection, Locke did not mean that God will revive and modify the deceased body. He meant that God will provide a new, incorruptible, “spiritual” body to the saved at the resurrection. He, indeed, saw the soul and the body as interdependent although distinct. Accordingly, he thought that the resurrected souls of the saved will need incorruptible bodies to sustain them for eternity. Conversely, concerning the bodies of the wicked at the resurrection, he abstained from making any conclusion because, he observed, the Scriptures do not shed light on this subject: “Nor doe I remember any mention of the change of the bodys where the resurrection of the wicked can be supposed to be comprehended. [...] But of the change

of their bodies of their being made spiritual or of their putting on incorruption or immortality I doe not remember any thing said. They shall be raised is said over & over, But how they are raised or with what bodyes they shall come the Scripture as far as I have observed is perfectly silent” (Locke 2002, 237). Finally, it is worth noting that, whereas Locke talked of the resurrection of “bodies” in the first three editions of the *Essay*, he later spoke repeatedly of the “resurrection of the dead”—not of their bodies—in its fourth edition, published in 1700, and in the *Paraphrase*, particularly when examining 1 Corinthians 15:42–50 (Locke 1975, IV.iii.29, 559–60, IV.xvii.23, 687, IV.xviii.7, 694; Locke 1987, 1:253–55). Locke’s paraphrase and notes on 1 Corinthians 15:42, indeed, make the same points as “Resurrectio et quae sequuntur” about “flesh and blood,” and “corruption,” which cannot inherit immortality (Locke 1987, 1:253). In the *Paraphrase*, Locke also reaffirmed his agnostic stance about the bodies of the wicked at the resurrection, given Paul’s silence on this matter, and he restated that the saved “shall have from Christ the second Adam spiritual body,” which will enable them to “subsist perpetually” in a “state of immutable incorruptibility” (Locke 1987, 1:254–55).

Although Locke’s mortalism was identical to some Socinians’ thnetopsychism, he made sure that his mortalist views, like all his theological ideas, were grounded in Scripture. However, his mortalist ideas, which he upheld already by the mid-1690s, had heterodox implications concerning personal identity. His conclusions about the soul’s death and its resurrection by divine miracle, along with his denial of the resurrection of the same body, are indeed incompatible with a notion of personal identity as located in the soul, or in the body, or in a union of soul and body. For this reason, too, Locke placed personal identity in consciousness, which provides a sort of (nontemporal) continuity to the self between death and resurrection for the Last Judgment, regardless of the substance to which consciousness is annexed.

## CONCLUSION

Locke’s consciousness-based theory of personal identity is the logical continuation of his agnosticism on substance, including the thinking substance. However, other factors, too, led him to develop a nonsubstantialist account of personhood centered on consciousness. According to Locke, personal identity entails moral accountability. When considering the need to provide reasons to be moral, he focused not only on human justice, but also on the Last Judgment. In his theological writings and in *Essay* II.xxvii, he inferred from Scripture that, on Judgment Day, one’s deeds will be taken into consideration. Therefore, he described personal identity, and hence moral accountability, as based on consciousness, which is presupposed to one’s moral evaluation of one’s own actions and, thus,

to repentance for past misdeeds and to the resolution and endeavor to obey the divine moral law. Furthermore, on Judgment Day, consciousness will enable the recollection of past actions and thoughts, thus making it possible to understand the reasons behind divine punishment or divine forgiveness and reward. One more reason behind Locke's nonsubstantialist, consciousness-based theory of personal identity is that he was a mortalist. Locke inferred from Scripture, particularly from Paul's epistles, that the soul dies with the body and will be resurrected for the Last Judgment only by divine miracle. Moreover, based on his reading of Scripture, he denied the resurrection of the same body. Consequently, personal identity cannot be in the soul, or the body, or a union of soul and body. According to Locke, personal identity is in consciousness, which, for the aforesaid reasons, will play a crucial role on Judgment Day. In conclusion, Locke's theory of personal identity was rooted not only in the agnostic implications of his way of ideas, but also in his moral and theological commitments to a system of otherworldly rewards and sanctions and, hence, in his biblical theology.

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