

ARE LOCKE'S PERSONS MODES OR SUBSTANCES?¹

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In Book II, Chapter xxvii of *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, Locke provides an account of the synchronic and diachronic identity of atoms, masses of matter (or bodies), animals, and, importantly for our purposes, persons. Locke sandwiches the chapter between his account of how we form ideas of relations generally (E II.xxv) and ideas of particular kinds of relations (such as cause and effect—E II.xxvi) and his account of yet other relations, including moral relations (E II.xxviii). Focused as he is on the relational ideas of identity and diversity, it is no surprise that Locke does not offer us an official ontology of persons. This raises the question of whether Locke is committed to a particular account of the nature of persons, a question that has generated no end of controversy among Locke scholars. In the *Essay*, Locke takes over from the scholastics the tripartite ontology of substance, mode, and relation (E II.xii.3: 164). One widely held view is that Locke's persons are substances, although some, following Thomas Reid, think the thesis embroils Locke in contradiction because he also wants to deny that personal identity depends on identity of (material or immaterial) substance.² An alternative reading is that the term 'substance' as Locke uses it is ambiguous, and that persons for Locke are substances in one sense but not in the other.³ And several influential scholars, following suggestive remarks of Locke's eighteenth century follower, Edmund Law, have gone further in arguing that Locke's persons are modes (perhaps even relations).⁴ My aim here is to argue that Locke's word 'substance', when

contrasted with ‘mode’ and ‘relation’, is not ambiguous in the way it has been thought to be, that the reasons for thinking that Locke considers persons to be modes (or relations) are weak, and that his views on the connection between persons and powers, and on the connection between powers and substances, commit him to the view that persons are *bona fide* substances (and not just substances in some very weak sense of ‘substance’).

Let us begin by looking at the basic categories of Locke’s ontology. Locke’s approach to metaphysics is through his theory of ideas. Ideas, for Locke, are the immediate objects of perception, thought, or understanding (E II.viii.8: 134), and every idea is either simple or complex. A simple idea (roughly speaking) is an idea that has no other ideas as parts, while a complex idea (again roughly speaking) is an idea that has other ideas as parts (E II.ii.1: 119 and E II.xii.1: 163-164).⁵ Locke divides complex ideas into three categories: ideas of modes, ideas of substances, and ideas of relations.⁶ Ideas of modes, he says, are “such 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” (E II.xii.4: 165). Ideas of modes divide into two further sub-classes: ideas of simple modes and ideas of mixed modes. Ideas of simple modes are “only variations, or different combinations of the same simple *Idea*, without the mixture of any other”, while every idea of a mixed mode is “a combination of several *Ideas* of several kinds” (E II.xii.5: 165). Ideas of substances, by contrast, “are such combinations of simple *Ideas*, as are taken to represent distinct particular things subsisting by themselves” (E II.xii.6: 165). These also divide into two sub-classes: ideas of single substances “as they exist separately”, and ideas of collective substances, which consist of ideas of single substances “put together” (E II.xii.6: 165-166). Finally, ideas of relations

are complex ideas deriving from the combination and comparison of two different ideas (E II.xii.7: 166 and E II.xxv: 319-324). Relations themselves, Locke tells us, depend for their existence on their relata: “[I]f either of [the relata] be removed, or cease to be, the Relation ceases, and the Denomination consequent to it, though the other receive in it self no alteration at all” (E II.xxv.5: 321).

From these remarks about complex ideas, we may derive the fundamental presuppositions of Locke’s ontology: first, that substances are “distinct particular things existing by themselves”, i.e., things that do not depend for their existence on the existence of anything else; second, that a mode is a “Dependence on, or Affection of” one substance; and third, that a relation is a “dependence on” two (possibly more) substances. These presuppositions match the basic ontological theory of Aristotelian scholasticism that Locke himself imbibed at Oxford, even as they are extractions from a non-scholastic theory of complex ideas. The question, then, is whether Locke considers persons to be substances, modes, or relations *so understood*.

Locke tells us that the word ‘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” (E II.xxvii.9: 335). So a person is a *being*. But this doesn’t answer our question because, as Locke also tells us: “Whatsoever doth, or can exist, or be considered as one thing, is positive: and so not only simple *Ideas*, and Substances, but Modes also are positive Beings” (E II.xxv.6: 321). Here Locke is helping himself to the scholastic distinction between positive beings and privations, privations being absences of positive being (as blindness is the absence of sight or a shadow is an “absence of light”—E II.viii.5: 133). Modes and substances both being “positive Beings”, it follows

that Locke is not telling us whether persons are modes or substances when he identifies persons as “Beings”. He may, however, be telling us that persons are not *relations*, given that relations, unlike beings, are “not contained in the real existence of Things, but something extraneous, and superinduced” (E II.xxv.8: 322).

Let us now focus on the reasons that have been given for thinking that persons are not substances. The reason that has received the lion’s share of attention derives from a comment of Reid’s and has been stated most clearly and forcefully by Shoemaker:

Personal identity, while it may be correlated with identity of substance, does not consist in this, and it “matters not at all,” so far as the nature of personal identity is concerned, “whether it be the same identical substance, which always thinks in the same person”... [But] if it follows from the definition of “person” that a person is a substance, it is surely self-contradictory to say that the identity of a person does not involve the identity of a substance. (1963, 45-46)

The problem, as Reid and Shoemaker see it, is that the non-substantial nature of persons appears to follow from Locke’s arguments in E II.xxvii to the effect that personal identity can be preserved through change of material substance or (for all we know) immaterial substance. For example, as is well known, Locke claims that “should the Soul of a Prince, carrying with it the consciousness of the Prince’s past Life, enter and inform the Body of a Cobler as soon as deserted by his own Soul, every one sees, he would be the same Person with the Prince” (E II.xxvii.15: 340). This is a hypothetical case of personal identity preserved through change of *material* substance. And “if,” as Locke says, “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" (E II.xxvii.13: 338). This, if it were possible, would be a case of personal identity preserved through change of *immaterial* substance. Locke concludes from these thought-experiments that "*personal Identity* consists, not in the Identity of Substance" (E II.xxvii.19: 342), that "[the Identity of Substance will not] unite remote Existences into the same Person" (E II.xxvii.23: 344), and that "*self* is not determined by Identity or Diversity of Substance" (E II.xxvii.23: 345). And it is easy to move from this conclusion (that, as Shoemaker puts it, the identity of a person does not 'involve' the identity of a substance) to the further conclusion that persons are not substances.

Various stratagems have been used to avoid the Reid-Shoemaker problem on Locke's behalf. One stratagem is to claim that Locke adopts a relative identity theory. According to this theory, it doesn't make sense to say that X is the same as Y *tout court*: the only thing that makes sense is to say that X is the same F as Y, where X's being the same F as Y does not guarantee that X is the same G as Y. If this were the right interpretation of Locke's remarks on identity, then it would enable him to say that person X is a substance, that X is the same person as Y, but that X is not the same substance as Y. Shoemaker's inference would therefore be invalid.⁷ Another stratagem is to claim that the word 'substance' in Locke's *Essay* is ambiguous, in particular that while in the rest of the book 'substance' just means 'thing', namely "that which has properties and stands in relations", in E II.xxvii (and *only* in this chapter) 'substance' means "*thing-like item that is quantified over at a basic level of one's ontology*".⁸ According to this proposal, Locke does not contradict himself, for it is in one sense (namely, the 'thing'

sense) that persons are substances while it is in a completely different sense (namely, the ‘basic thing-like item’ sense) that persons are not substances, for, unlike basic thing-like items, they have parts.

Supporters of the relative identity interpretation have had their day.⁹ But they have also faced serious criticism.¹⁰ My own view is that there are no proof-texts either for or against the claim that Locke’s use of ‘same’ is always relative to a sortal, and never absolute. Still, the relative identity interpretation strikes me as a radical departure from ordinary ways of speaking and thinking of identity, and I am convinced that Locke would, upon reflection, have agreed that his loose relative-identity-friendly talk is best restated by appeal to the concept of absolute identity. For example, when Locke uses the sentences “*White is not Black*” (E IV.i.2: 525) and “a circle is a circle” (E IV.vii.4: 594), he does not there immediately qualify his use of the word ‘is’ to make sure that the first sentence is read as “white is not *the same idea as* black” and the second is read as “a circle is *the same circle as* a circle” (or perhaps “*the idea of* a circle is *the same idea as the idea of* a circle”). I prefer, then, to look into ways of understanding Locke that do not commit him to the view that identity is always relative.

As for the proposal that Locke uses ‘substance’ to mean ‘basic thing-like item’ in E II.xxvii and just ‘thing’ elsewhere in the *Essay*, I see it as *ad hoc* and unmotivated, except as a solution to the Reid-Shoemaker problem. First, there is, as far as I can tell, no direct textual evidence that Locke intends his use of ‘substance’ in the chapter on identity to refer only to partless things. Indeed, Locke happily distinguishes there between “simple Substances” and “compounded ones”, with the clear implication in the rest of the relevant section that an atom (a “continued body under one immutable superficies”) is a

simple substance while a mass of matter (or body) is a compounded substance, that is, a substance with parts that are also substances (E II.xxvii.3: 330—see also E II.xxvii.17: 341). Second, when Locke says that “*self* is not determined by Identity or Diversity of Substance”, he is referring to the fact that there could be “two Persons with the same immaterial Spirit” and “two Persons with the same [human] Body”; from which it follows that he is thinking of *identity of human body* as a kind of *identity of substance*; from which it follows that he is thinking of a *human body* as a kind of *substance*, even though human bodies are hardly partless things. And finally, it seems incredible that Locke would have inserted chapter II.xxvii into the second edition of the *Essay* without some sort of clear indication there that he would be using the term ‘substance’ in a completely different sense. For he is keenly aware of the existence of ambiguity and of the consequent need to disambiguate in order to avoid philosophical confusion.¹¹ Thus, in a section on the “*willful Faults and Neglects, which Men are guilty of*” in the use of language, Locke writes that “the same Words (and those commonly the most material in the Discourse, and upon which the Argument turns) used sometimes for one Collection of simple *Ideas*, and sometimes for another...is a perfect abuse of Language...; the willful doing whereof, can be imputed to nothing but great Folly, or greater dishonesty”.¹²

What, then, is the right answer to the Reid-Shoemaker problem? The answer is simple. When Locke says that “*personal Identity* consists, not in the Identity of Substance” or that “*self* is not determined by Identity or Diversity of Substance”, he means no more than that, assuming that a person consists partly of a body and partly of a soul, it is possible for X and Y to be (i) the same person without having the same body (this is the point of the story of the prince and the cobbler—E II.xxvii.15: 340), (ii) the

same person without having the same soul (at least for all we know—E II.xxvii.13: 338), (iii) different persons while having the same body (this is the point of the first version of the story of the “*Day and the Night-man*”—E II.xxvii.23: 344), and (iv) different persons while having the same soul (this is the point of the second version of the story of the “*Day and Night-man*”—E II.xxvii.23: 345). From this it no more follows that a person is not a substance than it follows from the fact that X can be the same oak as Y without having any of the same matter that oak trees are not substances. As Winkler (1991, 217) aptly puts the point: “[The claim that personal identity is not determined by the unity or identity of substance is just Locke’s] way of saying that personal identity is not determined by the unity or identity of two kinds of substances in particular—immaterial souls and organized bodies.”¹³

Another reason, apart from the Reid-Shoemaker problem, that has been given for thinking that Locke’s persons can’t be substances is that Locke appears to suggest that there are ultimately only three kinds of substances: “individual material atoms, individual ‘finite spirits’ (including human souls), and God (an ‘infinite’ spirit)” (Lowe 1995, 73—see also 114). But since persons are not material atoms, finite spirits, or infinite spirits, it follows that persons are not substances.

One problem with this proposal is that what Locke says is more complicated and confusing than this simple summary suggests. In E II.xxvii.2, Locke writes that “[w]e have the *Ideas* but of three sorts of Substances; 1. God. 2. Finite Intelligences. 3. *Bodies*.” He then goes on to discuss each of these kinds of substance in turn, devoting one sentence to “God”, one sentence to “Finite Spirits”, and one sentence to “Particle[s] of Matter” (E II.xxvii.2: 329). The rest of the section is then devoted to discussion of

principles stated in the previous section (E II.xxvii.1: 328), namely that it is possible for two things of different kinds to exist in the same place at the same time, that it is impossible for two things of the same kind to exist in the same place at the same time, that one thing cannot have two beginnings of existence, and that two things cannot have one beginning of existence. Then, in E II.xxvii.3, Locke begins to apply his existence-based principle of individuation, first to simple bodies (atoms), second to compound inanimate bodies (masses of matter), and third to compound animate bodies (such as oaks and horses). The overall sweep of Locke's discussion strongly suggests, then, that his claim at the beginning of E II.xxvii.2 to the effect that God, finite spirits, and atoms are the only kinds of substances is better understood as the claim that God, finite spirits, and atoms are the only kinds of *simple* substances. And if this is the right way to read the relevant section, then, given that persons are surely compound substances if they are substances at all, there is no good reason to think that E II.xxvii.2 excludes them from the category of substance altogether.¹⁴

Perhaps, then, there are no knock-down textual arguments for the claim that Locke's persons are not substances. But some scholars think there is persuasive textual evidence that Locke's persons are modes. Let us now take a look at this evidence to determine just how probative it is.

Many of those who think of Locke's persons as modes take inspiration from Edmund Law's interpretation, which was first published as *A Defence of Mr. Locke's Opinion Concerning Personal Identity* in 1769 and then included in the standard edition of Locke's *Works* by Law himself in 1777.¹⁵ But mode interpretation enthusiasts might think about choosing their friends more carefully. Law notices that Locke recognizes that

the word ‘person’ is ambiguous, that it is used both in a “lax, popular sense” and also “more accurately and philosophically” (*Works* 3: 189). Locke himself explains the popular sense as follows: “I know that in the ordinary way of speaking, the same Person, and the same Man, stand for one and the same thing” (E II.xxvii.15: 340). But Law goes on to say that Locke’s definition of a person as a “thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places” is an account of the *popular* sense of the word ‘person’. “[W]hen the term is used more accurately and philosophically,” writes Law, “it stands for one especial property of that thing or being, separated from all the rest that do or may attend it in real existence” (*Works* 3: 189). Law then emphasizes the point in his Appendix, writing that Locke “has incautiously defined the word [‘person’]” (*Works* 3: 200), and that “I should imagine the expression would have been more just, had [Locke] said that the word person stands for an attribute, or quality, or character of a thinking intelligent being” (*Works* 3: 199).

This interpretation strikes me as clearly mistaken. Locke defines a person as a thinking intelligent being, and then tells us a few sections later that the word ‘person’, in its ordinary sense, means the same as ‘man’. In the very same section, Locke argues that the cobbler with the consciousness of the prince’s past life is the same *person*, but not the same *man*, as the prince. So Locke is not recommending that the word ‘person’ be used in its ordinary sense; rather, he is trying to *get away* from the popular sense, the very sense on which Law thinks Locke relies when providing his official definition of a person! Law has therefore misread Locke, and radically so. Locke’s official definition of ‘person’ is his account of the more accurate and philosophical sense of ‘person’, the

very sense on which he relies to show that the cobbler with consciousness of the prince's past life is the same person as the prince. So when Law says that Locke "incautiously defined" the word and should have defined it differently (as an "attribute, quality, or character of a thinking intelligent being"), what he is really doing is offering a *substitute* theory masquerading as a *restatement* of Locke's.

Uzgalis (1990) provides two main reasons for thinking that Locke's persons are modes, one textual, the other philosophical. The textual reason is based on a particular reading of the section in which Locke applies his principle of individuation to atoms, masses of atoms, and plants. I have already argued that the section helps us understand that Locke is not limiting the category of substances to simples. But this leaves open the possibility that Locke is thinking of complex entities such as masses of atoms, plants, animals, human beings, and also persons as modes, rather than as compound substances. According to Uzgalis, Locke takes masses of atoms to be compound substances, but takes plants, animals, humans, and persons to be modes, mixed modes in particular. Uzgalis notes that Locke begins to apply his existence-based principle of individuation as follows: "This though it seems easier to conceive in simple Substances or Modes; yet when reflected on, is not more difficult in compounded ones, if care be taken to what it is applied" (E II.xxvii.3: 330). If we assume that this statement frames the discussion to follow, what Locke is telling us is that he will begin by applying the *principium Individuationis* to simple substances and simple modes, and then move on to apply it to compounded substances and compounded modes. Uzgalis (1990, 287) then argues as follows:

Locke then explains how the principle applies to an atom, that is, *a simple substance* and a mass of atoms, *a compound substance*. He then distinguishes that mass of atoms from the oak. Since, apart from leaving out simple modes, Locke is following the order of topics set out at the beginning of the paragraph, and the mass of particles is a compound or collective substance, the oak is presumably a *compound* or *mixed mode*.

Uzgalis then notes that, in respect of the basic ontological category to which they belong, plants, animals, and humans do not differ: if plants are mixed modes, then animals and humans are mixed modes too. As he characterizes it, a mixed mode is “a thing which depends on substances for its existence, but which has a different unity relation than the compound substances on which it depends for its existence” (1990, 287). On this view, a mixed mode, unlike a compound substance, is the sort of thing that can persist over time through change of the substances on which it depends. Uzgalis then notes that the same is true of persons, and that “an individual person is thus a particular mixed mode for the same kinds of reasons that an individual man is” (1990, 292).

I find this textual argument unpersuasive. Uzgalis notes, accurately, that in the relevant section, Locke does not apply his principle of individuation to simple modes. But then it is unlikely that Locke’s initial framing statement (that “it seems easier to conceive [the principle] in simple Substances and Modes; yet when reflected on, is not more difficult in compounded ones”) represents some sort of organizational straightjacket. Given that Locke does not discuss simple modes anywhere in the paragraph, it seems best to read the framing statement as a loose prefiguration of the

discussion to follow. Indeed, the fact that simple modes are omitted from the discussion should suggest to us that Locke does not intend to apply his principle of individuation to modes at all! Rather, his plan is to focus on simple substances (such as atoms) first, and compound substances (such as masses of atoms and plants) second. I conclude that the relevant text does not argue for, and perhaps argues somewhat against, Uzgalis's mode interpretation.

Uzgalis's philosophical case for the mode interpretation is that it solves two otherwise potentially intractable interpretive puzzles. The first is the Reid-Shoemaker problem. I have already explained how this problem can be solved on the assumption that persons are substances, so I am going to set this problem aside. The second is that the mode interpretation of persons, unlike the substance interpretation, is straightforwardly consistent with Locke's substance-place-time principle that there cannot be two substances of the same kind in the same place at the same time. The problem for the substance interpretation is that if a person is a substance and the finite spirit that thinks in that person is also a substance, then, given that the person and the spirit are of the same kind and in the same place at the same time, it would follow that Locke's substance-place-time principle is false. By contrast, the mode interpretation does not contradict the substance-place-time principle, because while it classifies finite spirits as substances, it classifies persons as modes; thus, as Uzgalis notes: "It follows that there will not be two substances of the same kind in the same place at the same time when...a person and the immaterial substance which thinks in her are present. Rather there will be a substance and a particular mixed mode, two different things of two different kinds" (1990, 294).

I find Uzgalis's philosophical case for the mode interpretation no more persuasive than his textual case. For, unlike Uzgalis, I simply deny on Locke's behalf that persons and finite spirits (or souls) are of the same kind. Now it might be argued that Locke must hold that persons are souls of a sort since (a) there are only three kinds of substances, God, atoms, and souls (E II.xxvii.2: 329—see also Uzgalis (1990, 294)), and (b) no person is God or an atom. But, as I have already argued, it is possible to read Locke's claim that God, atoms, and souls are the only kinds of substances as the claim that God, atoms, and souls are the only kinds of *simple* substances; and this leaves open the possibility that persons are compound substances that are not to be identified with souls. And indeed, it is difficult to see how persons and souls could possibly belong to the same kind, given that, as Locke makes plain, the criterion of diachronic identity for persons differs radically from the criterion of diachronic identity for souls. This, after all, is the point of Locke's case for thinking that sameness of person does not entail, and is not entailed by, sameness of soul. On my view, the fact that a person and its soul can be in the same place at the same time is a straightforward consequence of two facts: (i) that a soul (if it exists) is a constituent of a person, and (ii) that a whole is where its constituents are. The relevant principle here is similar to the principle according to which a whole is where its parts are, the same principle that entails that a mass of matter (or body) is located in space and time exactly where its constituent atoms are. And given that persons and souls belong to two fundamentally different ontological kinds, it follows that the possibility of a person being located exactly where its soul is is no counterexample to Locke's substance-place-time principle.

The mode interpretation is also defended by Udo Thiel and Galen Strawson. As far as I can tell, neither Thiel nor Strawson provides an explicit textual or philosophical case for the mode interpretation. Both scholars adopt a more historicist approach, according to which the best interpretation of Locke involves finding a historical predecessor or contemporary with whose views Locke's seem most akin. Strawson follows Thiel in thinking that the relevant predecessor/contemporary is Pufendorf. Pufendorf claims that persons are moral entities, that is to say "*Modes superadded to Natural Things and Motions, by Understanding Beings; chiefly for the guiding and tempering the freedom of Voluntary actions, and for the procuring of a decent Regularity in the Method of Life*" (LNN I.i.3: 2). Yet, as Pufendorf sees it, many moral entities (such as persons) are "conceiv'd in the manner of Substances, because other Moral Things seem to be immediately founded in them, just as Quantities and Qualities inhere in the real Substance of Bodies" (LNN I.i.6: 4). On this view, persons are modes that are often spoken or thought of as if they were substances. This is well and good, but there is no more reason to think that Locke accepts Pufendorf's view than there is to think that Locke and Pufendorf are the same person. A historicist reading of this sort requires evidence, from correspondence, from hearsay, from some reliable source, tying Locke's composition of E II.xxvii to more than mere reading of, or inspiration by, Pufendorf.¹⁶ In the absence of such evidence, the Thiel-Strawson case for a Pufendorffian reading of Locke is merely speculative.

To make matters worse for the Pufendorffian reading of Locke, consider that a good deal of what Locke says about persons does not fit Pufendorf's idea that personhood (or personality) does not exist in nature but is superadded to natural things by intelligent

beings. Locke believes in the resurrection and the Day of Judgment when, in his words, “every one shall *receive according to his doings, the secrets of all Hearts shall be laid open* [*cf.* 1 Cor. 14: 25 and 2. Cor. 5: 10].” Importantly, though, as he writes, “[t]he 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” (E II.xxvii.26: 347). So, as Locke sees it, on the Great Day God rewards or punishes *persons* for the acts *they* committed in this life; and if person X committed atrocities in this life, then person Y will not be sentenced to permanent non-existence for the acts of X unless Y is the same person as X. It follows from all this that whether we earn immortality or death rests on facts about us as persons. Now on Pufendorf’s account, a person is a mode arbitrarily imposed by intelligent beings for moral purposes. So if intelligent beings were to choose not to superadd such modes onto human beings, there would be no persons. And if there were no persons, then Locke’s conception of what happens on the Day of Judgment would make no sense. Moreover, Locke is deriving his account of what happens on the Great Day from the Bible, and it seems odd in the extreme to suppose that, for him, whether what is stated in the Bible is true or false depends on the contingent choices of human creatures. Thus it seems unlikely in the extreme that Locke borrowed his conception of the nature of persons from Pufendorf.¹⁷

And so we come to what strikes me as the most sophisticated and challenging series of arguments for the mode interpretation, a set of considerations advanced by LoLordo (2010). LoLordo’s clever idea is to look, not only at what, for Locke, is

supposed to differentiate modes from substances, but also at what, for Locke, is supposed to differentiate *ideas of modes* from *ideas of substances*. Upon reflection, she identifies four main ways in which ideas of modes differ from ideas of substances, and with respect to each of these ways she claims that the idea of a person is better understood as an idea of a mode than as an idea of a substance. She also identifies one way in which modes differ from substances, and with respect to this way she claims that a person is better understood as a mode than as a substance.

In line with scholastic and Cartesian assumptions, the first way in which Locke distinguishes ideas of substances from ideas of modes is with respect to ontological independence or dependence:

1. “Ideas of substance[s] represent self-subsisting things, while ideas of modes represent things that depend on substances” (2010, 651).

As LoLordo rightly notes, Locke writes that ideas of substances “are taken to represent distinct particular things subsisting by themselves” (E II.xii.6: 165). By contrast, ideas of modes “contain not in them the supposition of subsisting by themselves, but are considered as Dependences on, or Affections of Substances” (E II.xii.4: 165). Applying this distinction to the case of persons, LoLordo reminds us that Locke defines persons as conscious beings (for it is only by means of consciousness that a thinking intelligent being can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing in different times and places) (E II.xxvii.9: 335). She then argues that persons, so conceived, “are more like modes than substances” (2010, 652). Her argument for this interpretive conclusion is this:

Locke gives numerous examples of a consciousness—and hence a person—shifting from one substance to another. However, he never suggests that it is possible or conceivable for a consciousness to float free without subsisting in *some* living human organism or immaterial thinking substance. If persons were thought of as substances rather than modes, there would be no need for Locke to restrict himself to examples where organism or soul is changed: he could also use examples where there was a consciousness without any organism or soul. (2010, 651)

I do not find this argument convincing. Locke writes that every self is “made up of” a substance, whether that substance be “Spiritual, or Material, Simple, or Compounded” (E II.xxvii.17: 341); he distinguishes between the question “what makes the same *Person*” and the question “whether it be the same Identical Substance, which always thinks in the same *Person*” (E II.xxvii.10: 336); and he speaks of “the *Substance*, whereof *personal self* consisted at one time (E II.xxvii.11: 337). As Bolton, Chappell, Strawson, and others have noted, Locke is here pointing out that selves (i.e., persons) are compounded beings, beings “made up of” (or partly constituted by, or partly consisting of) substances. Suppose, then, that persons are compound substances, that is, substances that have other substances as parts. *Which* parts? Locke writes that all the particles and limbs of our bodies “whilst vitally united to this same thinking conscious self, so that we feel when they are touch’d, and are affected by, and conscious of good or harm that happens to them, are a part of our *selves*: i.e. of our thinking conscious *self*” (E

II.xxvii.11: 336). But Locke's reference to the substance that "thinks in" a person also suggests that he takes the mind or spirit, whether material or immaterial, to be a part of the person. Every person, then, is constituted at any one time by a body and a mind (as well as by the particles that constitute the body). So the fact that a person cannot "float free without subsisting in *some* living human organism or immaterial thinking substance" need not betoken the fact that a person is a mode: it could simply betoken the fact that a person is always constituted by a body and a mind. Locke tells us that animals (including humans, sheep (E II.xii.6: 165), horses (E II.xxiii.3: 296), and swans (E II.xxiii.14: 305)) and plants (E III.vi.9: 444-445—including lilies and roses) are substances. Just as a person can shift from one ensouled body to another, so can an animal or plant shift from one mass of matter to another. But it would be a mistake to suggest, as LoLordo in effect does, that "if animals or plants were thought of as substances rather than modes, there would be no need for Locke to restrict himself to examples where their material particles were changed: he could also use examples where there was life without any mass of matter". The fact that a person cannot exist without an ensouled body no more indicates that persons are modes than the fact that a sheep cannot exist without a mass of matter indicates that a sheep is a mode.

The second way in which Locke distinguishes between ideas of substances and ideas of modes concerns what these ideas are supposed to represent:

2. "Substance ideas are supposed to represent the distinct particulars they are tacitly referred to. Mode ideas are not; rather, they are intended to represent whatever things happen to fit them" (2010, 652).

There is surely something to this. As LoLordo notes, ideas of modes are meant “to denominate all Things, that should happen to agree to” them (E III.vi.46: 468), while ideas of substances “carry with them the Supposition of some real Being, from which they are taken, and to which they are conformable” (E III.v.3: 429). Because of the supposition that they answer to the reality of things, ideas of substances can be false or fantastical when they do not so answer; by contrast, ideas of modes can be neither false nor fantastical. For, as Locke puts it, “[w]hatever complex *Idea* I have of any Mode, it hath no reference to any Pattern existing, and made by Nature: it is not supposed to contain in it any other *Ideas*, than what it hath; nor to represent any thing, but such a Complication of *Ideas*, as it does” (E II.xxxii.17: 390). Moreover, ideas of mixed modes and relations, “being themselves Archetypes, cannot differ from their Archetypes, and so *cannot be chimerical*, unless any one will jumble together in them inconsistent *Ideas*” (E II.xxx.4: 373), whereas ideas of substances, “being made all of them in reference to Things existing without us, as they really are, ...are *fantastical*, [when they] are made up of such Collections of simple *Ideas*, as were really never united, never were found together in any Substance” (E II.xxx.5: 374).

Picking up on this difference, LoLordo argues that ideas of persons are not capable of being false or fantastical, and hence must be ideas of modes rather than ideas of substances. Her evidence for this, however, is indirect. She argues that the fact that substance ideas are supposed to represent the worldly things to which they are referred entails that we would revise such ideas under certain circumstances, the kinds of circumstances under which we would not revise ideas of modes. She then argues that the

relevant sorts of circumstances would not prompt us to revise our idea of a person, and hence that our idea of a person is an idea of a mode.

Under what sorts of circumstances does LoLordo think that we would revise our substance ideas? LoLordo provides the idea of gold as an example:

Suppose that at one point I had an idea of gold that included being yellow. Later I came to believe that not all gold is yellow, perhaps as a result of finding non-yellow things that were otherwise very much like the things I had originally counted as gold. I would revise my idea of gold to leave out the idea of being yellow. (2010, 647).

But, appealing to the idea of murder as an example, LoLordo argues that we would not revise our mode ideas under similar sorts of circumstances:

Suppose that at one point I had an idea of murder that included premeditation. Later I came to believe that none of the crimes I had hitherto counted as murder had in fact been premeditated. As a result of this, I would not revise my idea of murder; rather, I would be glad to have learned that no such heinous crimes had ever been committed. (2010, 647)

In this respect, she argues, the idea of a person is like the idea of murder, and not like the idea of gold:

[C]onsider how I would react were it to turn out that none of [the living animal bodies that surround us] 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 animal bodies around me accordingly. (2010, 652)

So, because we would not revise it in circumstances in which we come to discover apparent instances of the relevant kind that do not possess a property we initially associated with the kind, LoLordo concludes that the idea of a person, like the idea of murder but unlike the idea of gold, is the idea of a mode.

Now the first thing to note about this argument is that the presence or absence of a disposition to revise an idea under these sorts of circumstances is insufficient evidence of the idea's status as a mode idea or substance idea. For there are mode ideas that we are disposed to revise, and substance ideas that we are not disposed to revise, in the relevant circumstances. Consider the idea of a triangle. Triangles are modes in Locke's universe, so the idea of a triangle is the idea of a mode. Suppose now that when my mother taught me what a triangle was, she showed me nothing but instances of triangles on flat surfaces. As a result of this training, I come to include the idea of flatness in my idea of a triangle. I then discover that it is possible to draw a three-sided closed plane figure on a curved surface. Am I disposed to revise my idea of a triangle to exclude from it the idea of being flat? Absolutely! But then it cannot be that, as a general rule, we are *not* disposed to revise a *mode* idea when we discover apparent instances of the idea that do not possess a

property we used to include in the idea. Now consider the idea of a human being. Human beings are substances in Locke's universe, so the idea of a human being is the idea of a substance. Suppose now that I discover that some (even all!) of the things in the world I take to be human are not animals: they are robots or zombies or Vulcans, or what have you. Am I disposed to revise my idea of a human being to exclude from it the idea of animality? Absolutely not: surely I will keep my idea of human being and conclude that the robots, zombies, and Vulcans are not human beings. But then it cannot be that, as a general rule, we *are* disposed to revise a *substance* idea when we discover apparent instances of the idea that do not possess a property we used to associate with the relevant kind. LoLordo's revision test for differentiating between mode ideas and substance ideas therefore fails, and the fact that we are not disposed to revise our idea of a person when we discover that some or all of the individuals we initially took to be persons are not conscious does not entail that the idea of a person is the idea of a mode.

With respect to the idea of the substance gold in particular, Locke actually discusses a case very like the cases LoLordo imagines. Here is what he says:

Should there be a Body found, having all the other Qualities of Gold, except Malleableness, 'twould, no doubt, be made a question whether it were Gold or no; *i.e.* whether it were of that *Species*. This could be determined only by that abstract *Idea*, to which every one annexed the name *Gold*: so that it would be true Gold to him, and belong to that *Species*, who included not Malleableness in his nominal Essence, signified by the Sound *Gold*; and on the other side, it would not be true Gold, or of that *Species* to him, who included Malleableness in his

specifick *Idea*...Nor is it a mere Supposition to imagine, that a Body may exist, wherein the other obvious Qualities of Gold may be without Malleableness; since it is certain, that Gold it self will be sometimes so eager, (as Artists call it) that it will as little endure the Hammer, as Glass it self. (E III.vi.35: 461-462)

Here Locke imagines meeting up with a non-malleable substance that is just like gold in every other way (color, fusibility, weight, fixedness, solubility in aqua regia, and so on). Assuming that our idea of gold already contains the idea of malleableness, the question arises whether we would revise our idea of gold so as to exclude the idea of malleableness from it, and thereby count the newly discovered non-malleable substance as gold. Locke does not say, but what he does say strongly suggests that he does not think that we would automatically revise. For he suggests that some would react to the case by counting the non-malleable substance as gold, while others would react to the case by refusing to count the non-malleable substance as gold. Presumably, the latter's reaction would be based on their refusal to revise their idea of gold by eliminating from it the idea of malleableness. The whole tenor of the passage, in its context, is that revision of one's ideas under these sorts of circumstances is an arbitrary matter, in large part because the most important end served by classification by means of complex ideas is convenience (E III.vi.36: 462); and what may be convenient for one group of speakers may not be convenient for another. So, at least with respect to our ideas of substances, Locke suggests that we are not always disposed to modify our idea of X when we discover apparent instances of X that do not have a property initially associated with the relevant kind.¹⁸

Taking a broader view, it becomes clear that LoLordo's mistake here lies in thinking that the revision test *follows from* Locke's claim that substance ideas, unlike mode ideas, are supposed to answer to the reality of things. The latter claim is no more than the proposition that our ideas of substances, unlike our ideas of modes, are framed with the aim of capturing qualities that are united in our experience. It does follow from this that if we find a new quality that is always experientially united with an already experientially unified bundle of qualities, we may be disposed to revise our idea of the relevant substance by including in it an idea that represents the new quality. So, for example, when we discover that the substance we have been identifying as gold on the strength of its color, weight, fusibility, malleability, fixedness, and solubility in aqua regia also changes color "upon a slight touch of Mercury" (E II.xxxi.6: 379), we may be tempted to include the idea of mercury-induced color change in our idea of gold. But words and ideas are used primarily with a view to convenience, both with respect to one's own purposes and with respect to communication with others. And convenience may work against revision as easily as it may work in its favor. In the case of persons, we may be just as opposed to jettisoning the idea of consciousness from the idea of a person as we are to jettisoning the idea of an animal from the idea of a human being, or the idea of solidity from the idea of gold, or the idea of the power to think from the idea of a mind. But this no more establishes that persons are modes than it establishes that human beings, gold, and minds are modes.

The third way in which Locke distinguishes between ideas of substances and ideas of modes concerns essence and adequacy:

3. “Real and nominal essences are the same for modes, different for substances. The real essences of modes are known while the real essences of substances are unknown. [Consequently], [m]ode ideas are adequate, substance ideas inadequate” (2010, 652).

Again, LoLordo is definitely picking up on an important distinction between ideas of modes and ideas of substances. The nominal essence of a substance referred to by the name N is the complex idea signified by N, an idea that includes both the idea of substratum and ideas of the various qualities that co-exist in our experience. Its real essence, by contrast, is the real constitution on which all of its other properties depend and from which they flow (E III.vi.2: 439). In the case of substances, the real essence differs from the nominal essence (E III.vi.3: 439-440). In the case of modes, the real essence and the nominal essence are identical (E III.v.14: 436-437). Given that we know the simple ideas that constitute the idea of a mode (because we have chosen those simple ideas and put them together into the mode idea), we know the mode’s real essence. By contrast, we do not know the real essences of substances (E III.vi.9: 444). But ideas are adequate when and only when they “perfectly represent those Archetypes, which the Mind supposes them taken from; which it intends them to stand for and to which it refers them” (E II.xxxi.1: 375). And given that ideas are intended to represent the real essences of the things to which they refer, it follows that ideas of modes are adequate (E II.xxxi.3: 376) but ideas of substances are inadequate (E II.xxxi.6: 378-379).

This distinction provides LoLordo with a way of arguing that ideas of persons are ideas of modes, rather than ideas of substances. The basic strategy is simple: ideas of

persons are adequate, but only ideas of modes (and not ideas of substances) are adequate, so ideas of persons are ideas of modes (2010, 652). But what is LoLordo's evidence for the claim that, for Locke, ideas of persons are adequate?

LoLordo argues that the "process of conceptual analysis" based on the fanciful thought experiments of E II.xxvii (hypothetical scenarios involving transfer of consciousness, reincarnation, and so on) yields "real and informative knowledge" (2010, 661), such as the knowledge that a person is not an organism or an immaterial substance, but rather a continuing consciousness (2010, 660). She goes on to argue that real and informative knowledge is available when it concerns adequate ideas, but not when it concerns inadequate ideas. In particular, in the case of inadequate ideas, such as ideas of substances, the only kind of available knowledge concerns "such trifling [i.e., uninformative] propositions as *gold is a metal* (4.8.13)" (2010, 661). It follows that ideas of persons are adequate.

Ultimately, I do not find this argument of LoLordo's convincing. The main problem is that, for Locke, the adequacy of ideas and the informativeness of the mental propositions constructed from them are not correlated in the way LoLordo describes. One reason for this is that whether a proposition is informative or trifling turns out to be an arbitrary matter. Locke claims that there are two sorts of trifling propositions: (i) "*purely identical Propositions*", in which "we affirm the same Term of it self" (E IV.viii.2: 609), such as "*a Soul is a Soul; a Spirit is a Spirit; a Fetich is a Fetich, etc.*" (E IV.viii.3: 610); and (ii) "*when a part of the complex Idea is predicated of the Name of the whole*" (E IV.viii.4: 612), such as "*Lead is a Metal*" (E IV.viii.4: 612), "*All Gold is fusible*" (E IV.viii.5: 612), and "*Saffron is yellow*" (E IV.viii.7: 614). Instructive

propositions, by contrast, are claims “which affirm something of another, which is a necessary consequence of its precise complex *Idea*, but not contained in it,” such as “*the external Angle of all Triangles, is bigger than either of the opposite internal Angles*” (E IV.viii.8: 614). So if idea X is either identical to or included in idea Y, then the proposition that X is Y (or: all X’s are Y’s) is trifling; otherwise the proposition is instructive.

LoLordo’s claim is that there can be no instructive claims involving inadequate ideas, such as ideas of substances, whereas there can be (and are) instructive claims involving adequate ideas, such as ideas of modes. But this can’t be right. Consider a case in which Martha’s idea of gold includes ideas of its color, fusibility, weight, fixedness, and ductility. Suppose now that after a series of experiments, Martha discovers that everything that fits her nominal essence of gold is also soluble in aqua regia. What is the status of the proposition (G) that gold is soluble in aqua regia? Is it instructive or trifling? The answer is that it depends on what Martha now chooses to include in her idea of gold. If she chooses to include the idea of solubility in aqua regia in her idea of gold, then proposition (G) is trifling; but if she chooses not to include the idea of solubility in aqua regia in her idea of gold, then proposition (G) is instructive. As we have seen, which ideas get included in which substance ideas is a matter of decision, governed only by the need to unify ideas that represent experientially unified properties and, most importantly, convenience. So if convenience dictates that the idea of solubility in aqua regia *not* be included in Martha’s idea of gold, then (G) will turn out to be an instructive proposition involving an inadequate idea, namely the idea of gold. And, indeed, Locke acknowledges the possibility of such propositions, writing that “the

general *Propositions* that are made *about Substances, if they are certain, are for the most part but trifling*” (E IV.viii.9: 615—underlining added). It follows that even if the propositions about persons Locke establishes by means of his fanciful cases in E II.xxvii are instructive, it does not follow that ideas of persons must be ideas of modes; they could yet be ideas of substances.

LoLordo thinks that the fancifulness of the cases in E II.xxvii is rare in the context of the *Essay* as a whole, and that this is correlated with the fact that the propositions about persons supported by these cases are informative and with the fact that the ideas of persons that figure in these propositions are ideas of modes, rather than ideas of substances. But there are, in fact, other places in the *Essay*—places LoLordo does not consider—in which Locke uses fanciful cases to argue for potentially informative conclusions that are not clearly about modes. The clearest example of this is in E II.xiii, the chapter on the simple modes of space. There Locke provides three thought-experiment-driven arguments against the non-trifling Cartesian thesis that a vacuum, or space devoid of body, is impossible in nature. In the first argument, we are asked whether, “if *Body* be not supposed infinite [and] God placed a Man at the extremity of corporeal Beings, he could not stretch his Hand beyond his Body”. If such a man *could* stretch his hand beyond his body, then, concludes Locke, there would be “*Space* without *Body*” (E II.xiii.21: 175-176). In the second argument, we are asked whether “God can put an end to all motion that is in Matter, and fix all Bodies of the Universe in a perfect quiet and rest,” and whether “God can, during such a general rest, annihilate either this Book, or the Body of him that reads it”. If this is something God could do, then, concludes Locke, we “must necessarily admit the possibility of a *Vacuum*” (E

II.xiii.21[bis]: 176). And in the third argument, we are asked to imagine dividing “a solid Body, of any dimension [one] pleases, as to make it possible for the solid Parts to move up and down freely every way within the bounds of that Superficies,” and left to conclude (as atomists did) that this would be possible only on the condition that there be left “a void space, as big as the least part into which [one] has divided the said solid Body,” even if such part were “100,000,000 less than a Mustard-seed” (E II.xiii.22: 177). These fanciful cases are, methodologically speaking, no different from the fanciful cases Locke uses to establish conclusions about persons in the chapter on identity. And yet these conclusions, including the proposition that body is not the same as extension or extended substance, are not (or, at least, not clearly) about a mode. For (empty) space, in Locke’s metaphysics, is not clearly either substance or accident: given that the ideas of substance and accident are neither clear nor distinct, this is an issue about which Locke insists on a principled agnosticism (E II.xiii.17: 174). It would therefore be a mistake to conclude from the fancifulness of Locke’s thought experiments about persons that persons are more likely to be modes than substances. For he is clearly prepared to use fanciful thought experiments to shed light on the nature of entities he does not know to be modes.

LoLordo relies on Locke’s claim that we know the real essence of modes but do not know the real essence of substances to provide a second argument for the conclusion that Locke’s persons are modes.¹⁹ Locke defines knowledge as “the perception of the Agreement, of Disagreement of any two *Ideas*” (E IV.ii.15: 538), and divides knowledge into two categories, intuitive knowledge and demonstrative knowledge, depending on whether the relevant perception is immediate (i.e., “without the intervention of any other [idea]”—E IV.ii.1: 531) or mediate (i.e., with the intervention of other ideas, which,

when strung together in such a way that any two contiguous ones are immediately perceived to agree or disagree, constitute a proof or demonstration). In this sense of ‘demonstration’, as LoLordo points out, Locke believes that “*Morality is capable of Demonstration*” on the grounds that “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” (E III.xi.16: 516—see also E IV.iii.18: 549). But only modes are such that their real essences can be perfectly known. It follows, then, that moral words stand for modes, not for substances. But now, LoLordo argues, for Locke the word ‘person’ is a “central moral term” (2010, 663). She gives two textually based reasons for this. First, Locke writes that the ideas that represent the “Foundations of our Duty and Rules of Action, as might place *Morality amongst the Sciences capable of Demonstration*” are (i) “[t]he *Idea* of a supreme Being, infinite in Power, Goodness, and Wisdom, whose Workmanship we are, and on whom we depend” and (ii) “the *Idea* of our selves, as understanding, rational Beings” (E IV.iii.18: 549). But Locke uses the words ‘self’ and ‘person’ interchangeably, at least in E II.xxvii.²⁰ So this passage strongly suggests that ‘person’ is a moral word, and hence a term for a mode. Second, Locke famously emphasizes in his chapter on identity that the word ‘person’ “is a Forensick Term appropriating Actions and their Merit; and so belongs only to intelligent Agents capable of a Law, and Happiness and Misery” (E II.xxvii.26: 346), and in particular that “[i]n this *personal Identity* is founded all the Right and Justice of Reward and Punishment” (E II.xxvii.18: 341), and hence that “punishment [is] annexed to personality” (E II.xxvii.22: 344). But if ‘person’ is a forensic term, then it is a moral word, and hence a term for a mode.

LoLordo notices one major difficulty for her argument that the idea of a person must be a mode idea because only mode ideas can figure in a demonstrative science of morals: the difficulty is that the idea of God, as Locke notes, is central to such a science, and yet God is clearly a substance, not a mode. LoLordo finesses this difficulty as follows. She writes that God differs from created substances in that “we have at least partial knowledge of [His] real essence”. And we have such partial knowledge because we can demonstrate His existence (E IV.x), and from His existence we can demonstrate “his *Omniscience, Power, and Providence...and all his other Attributes*” (E IV.x.12: 625). By contrast, we do not have even partial knowledge of the real essence of created substances, whether material or immaterial. LoLordo concludes that the idea of God is the only exception to the general rule that only ideas of modes can play a role in the demonstration of moral truths.

This is a clever way out of a tricky problem, but I am not convinced. For, even after having noted that the demonstrability of moral truths follows from the fact that such truths concern modes rather than substances, Locke acknowledges that “the names of Substances are often to be made use of in Morality, as well as those of Modes”. He does this in the famous “moral man” passage, which is worth quoting in its entirety:

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, [one] has [one's] clear settled *Idea*, which varies not, though it may, by mistake, be applied to a particular Body, to which it belongs not. (E III.xi.16: 516-517)

What Locke is telling us here is that the word 'God' is not the only substance term that "should" (Locke's term) be used in moral discourse: the substance term 'man' should also play an important role in the demonstrative science of morals, in just the way that the substance term 'cube of gold' can play an important role in the demonstrative science of mathematics. But if substance terms can (and indeed, should) play a role in moral discourse, then the fact that 'person' is a moral term does not entail that it is a term for a mode, rather than a term for a substance. And thus it seems that this argument of LoLordo's gives us no reason to suppose that persons must be modes.

But LoLordo has a king up her sleeve. In response to this criticism, she claims that the fact that a monkey could be a 'man' in the sense of E III.xi.16 shows that the

word ‘man’ is not being used with its ordinary meaning (i.e., ‘living human animal’). Rather, it is being used to stand for the idea of a corporeal rational being, that is to say, a moral man or person. And, she says, the idea of a moral man, despite the fact that a substance term is being used to stand for it, is an idea of a mode, rather than a substance. In support of this claim, LoLordo makes two points:

(1) I think Locke’s claim that the idea of the moral man is an ‘immoveable unchangeable idea,’ unaffected by the naturalists’ discoveries concerning the real essence or other qualities of living human creatures, strongly suggests that the idea of the moral man is the idea of a mode. (2) So does the comparison between using substance names in moral and mathematical discourse: it is clear that when we use substance names in mathematics, we are not using them to stand for substances. Mathematical entities just aren’t substances. (2010, 656)

But if these reasons count as LoLordo’s king, then here is my ace. LoLordo, I suggest, has misunderstood the ‘moral man’ passage. What Locke says is not that moral discourse includes substance terms that are used to refer to modes, but rather that substance terms, when used in moral discourse, are used to refer to substances whose natures are “not so much enquir’d into, as supposed”, substances whose “real Essence or other Qualities...is no way considered”. Locke does not merely say that “the names of Substances are often to be made use of in Morality”, a claim that, taken on its own, is consistent with LoLordo’s hypothesis that moral substance names refer to modes: he also says that substances themselves are “concerned in moral Discourses”, i.e., that moral

discourses are *about* substances, and not merely *about* modes. His point is that, in moral discourse, unlike other discourse, the nature or real essence of the substances referred to by substance names *does not matter* and is simply disregarded. The same thing is true of mathematics. Locke does not say that the term ‘cube of gold’ refers to a *mode*: what he says is that the term refers to a *body*. And a *body*, in Locke’s ontology, is a substance. His point about mathematics is that the fact that a cube of gold is made of *gold* does not matter for mathematical enquiry: what matters is the fact that the cube of gold is a *cube*. And his point about human beings or persons is that it does not matter for moral purposes what kind of thing a human being or person is fundamentally (material or immaterial) or which of its properties (or which properties of its parts) explain the existence of the rest: what matters is the fact that humans and persons are *rational*. Rationality, of course, is a mode, in the way that a cube (or cubicality) is a mode. But Locke is not telling us that the word ‘man’ in moral discourse refers to the mode of rationality any more than he is telling us that the word ‘cube of gold’ in mathematical discourse refers to the mode of cubicality.

As to the immoveability and unchangeability of the idea of a moral man, there is no reason to suppose that these properties of the idea indicate that it is a mode idea rather than a substance idea. The idea of a moral man, Locke says, is the idea of a corporeal rational creature. But the idea of a corporeal thing is the idea of a body, and a body is a substance. So this strongly suggests that moral men are substances. Beyond this, the immoveability and unchangeability of the idea of a moral man consists in the fact that it is not subject to revision upon the discovery of new empirical facts. By contrast, the ordinary complex idea of a human being *is* subject to such revision, as when one

discovers changelings or thinks about children. Thus, one might start, as the scholastics do, by thinking of human beings as rational animals, but then discover that, though changelings and children are the offspring of human beings so understood, they are not rational. And their lack of rationality, combined with the desire to count them as human because they are the offspring of humans, may result in the revision of one's idea of humanity via the omission of the idea of rationality and the addition of other identifying features, such as shape (E III.vi.26: 453-454). The unrevisability of the idea of a moral man as a corporeal rational being stems from the fact that empirical considerations are irrelevant to moral claims: nothing we can possibly discover about the nature, shape, or other corporeal quality of a rational creature will lead to revision of the idea of a moral man, because no other idea will do for the purposes of moral discourse. And none of this suggests that the idea of a moral man must be a mode idea; for all that Locke tells us, it might simply be a substance idea that we would never have reason to change.

The fourth and final way in which Locke distinguishes between ideas of modes and ideas of substances is with respect to whether they contain the idea of substratum as a component:

4. "Substance ideas include [the idea of] a substratum. Mode ideas do not" (2010, 652—see 648).

LoLordo is absolutely right about this. Locke emphasizes that, in the case of substances but not in the case of modes, we assume that the qualities we think of as picked out by the nominal essence inhere in a substratum that supports them, because we cannot imagine

“how these simple [qualities] can subsist by themselves” (E II.xxiii.1: 295). LoLordo then argues that there are reasons to think that the idea of a person does not include the idea of a substratum, and hence that the idea of a person is a mode idea. She writes:

In Locke’s various examples of transfer of consciousness and body switching, we imagine consciousness persevering while what it inheres in—and hence, presumably, the relevant substratum—changes. We would not find this so easy to imagine if the idea of a substratum were essential to our idea of a person. (2010, 652)

Consider the most extreme case of consciousness transfer. Imagine that a cobbler has lost his soul, but that the soul of a prince, with the prince’s thoughts and memories, is transferred to the body of the cobbler. Imagine further that the prince’s soul, now associated with the body of the cobbler, is replaced with a new soul without any alteration to the individual’s consciousness. What we have after both replacements is the same person (i.e., the prince) with a completely different body and a completely different soul. Clearly, as LoLordo says, the substratum in which the prince’s consciousness inheres has been replaced. But this does not entail, nor does it in any way suggest, that the idea of a person does not include the idea of a substratum. The idea of a substratum is not the idea of a particular entity, but rather a “*Notion of pure Substance in general*” (E II.xxiii.2: 295). As Locke makes clear in his correspondence with Stillingfleet, “it is a complex idea, made up of the general [i.e., abstract] idea of something, or being, with the [relative and abstract idea of a] relation of a support to accidents” (*Works* 4: 19). As long

as we continue to suppose that there is *something supporting his consciousness*, it is unproblematic for us to imagine a person moving from one body-soul combination to another. Even if every person must have some substratum, it need not have the *same* substratum throughout the course of its existence.

Finally, LoLordo argues for the claim that persons are modes from the claim that the unity of persons, like modal unity but unlike substantial unity, is mind-dependent:

Substances are unified because their properties flow from a mind-independent internal constitution, substratum or real essence. Modes are unified because their properties flow from a mind-dependent essence. I argue, following Ken Winkler's account of the subjective constitution of the self in Locke, that Lockean persons are constituted by appropriative mental acts. Hence the unity of persons is mind-dependent in the same way the unity of modes is mind-dependent. (2010, 653)

This argument relies heavily on the theory of personhood and personal identity defended by Winkler (1991). In that article, Winkler focuses on Locke's references to action appropriation, ownership, imputation, and concern to argue that the "self is constituted by what [one] take[s] to be included in it" (1991, 205), and is in this sense "subjectively constitut[ed]" (1991, 204). But, to his credit, Winkler also recognizes that whatever authority the self has over its own constitution "is not consciously exerted". As he puts the point: "I do not willfully disown one act and appropriate another; instead I accept what my consciousness reveals to me" (191, 206). The problem, both for Winkler and

for LoLordo, is that the subjective constitution of the self is not consistent with the claim that action appropriation is not the result of a conscious mental act of volition or exertion. Taking an action to be included in oneself is a voluntary mental act if anything is. But all volitions, indeed all mental acts, for Locke, are necessarily conscious. So it cannot happen that the self's authority is not consciously exerted. At bottom, Winkler's proposal, suggestive as it is, raises more questions than it answers.

For Locke, as Strawson rightly emphasizes, what counts as one part or the whole of a person is determined entirely by the relation of concern. If I have a direct interest in what happens to this finger, then the finger is part of me; if I have a direct interest in what some boy did in the past, then that boy and I are the same person. But concern is not the result of some mental act of action appropriation: it is itself determined by the relation of actual or potential consciousness. Whatever action I am conscious of is automatically an object of my concern, for I can predict that God will reward or punish me for it, depending on whether it is good or bad. Whatever body part I am conscious of automatically concerns me, for I can predict that anything that happens to that body part will produce some sort of effect on me. No act of mental appropriation, of taking X to be Y, is required to get the relevant concern going: all that is required, as Locke says over and over again in E II.xxvii, is (possible or actual) consciousness, a mode of thought that is not under the direct control of the will. But then there is no reason to suppose that the constitution or unity of the self is *subjective*. My various acts and body parts are not unified because I choose to look at them a certain way or because I take them to be a part of me; they are unified simply because I am (actually or potentially) conscious of them in a way that I am not (actually or potentially) conscious of other acts and body parts. And

what I am conscious of is an objective matter, a matter that is completely independent of what I desire or will. There is therefore no reason to think that the unity of the self is *mind-dependent* in the way that the unity of modes is (if it is).²¹ Indeed, the fact that concern is determined by consciousness, and that consciousness is not an artifact of desire or volition, establishes that the unity of the self is *mind-independent*, in just the way that the unity of substances in general is mind-independent.

In the end, every one of the arguments LoLordo provides for thinking that Lockean persons are modes fails. What remains to be discussed is whether there is any powerful reason for thinking that Lockean persons must be substances. And indeed there is. In an important passage that mode interpretation enthusiasts appear to have overlooked, Chappell (1990, 28) describes the following consideration as “one conclusive reason for holding that persons are substances for Locke”:

[P]ersons are agents, and have actions and powers ascribed to them. Locke defines a person as “a thinking intelligent Being” (II.xxvii.9: 335); and thinking, he tells us repeatedly (e.g., on E II.xxvii.2: 329), is an action. The action of thinking, furthermore, is an exercise of the power of thinking, and he expressly says, in a passage in the chapter on Power, “that *Powers* belong only to *Agents*, and *are Attributes only of Substances*” (E II.xxi.16: 241).

To me, the quotation at the end of this passage is about as close to a proof text as can be found in the history of philosophy. Locke defines a person as a being that “can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places” (E II.xxvii.9: 335).

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). So here is an example of a power attributed to persons. (A person has many other powers, some passive, others active: it is "capable of Happiness or Misery" (E II.xxvii.17: 341), it "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" (E II.xxvii.10: 336), it can do good deeds and be rewarded or it can sin and be punished (E II.xxvii.26: 346-347), and so on.)²² But if, as Locke also says, powers are attributes only of substances, it follows directly that persons are substances.

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NOTES

¹ I presented a shorter version of this paper at a July 2012 conference at the University of York in memory of Roger Woolhouse. I am very grateful to the organizers of the conference, Tom Stoneham and Paul Lodge, for inviting me. I also wish to thank the conference participants and attendees for their very helpful comments and questions, particularly Keith Allen, Maria Rosa Antognazza, Donald Baxter, Martha Bolton, Justin Broackes, Lisa Downing, Antonia LoLordo, Peter Millican, Lex Newman, Gonzalo Rodriguez-Pereyra, and Pauline Phemister.

² For the claim that Locke holds that persons are substances, see Atherton (1983, 286), Chappell (1990, 27-28), Winkler (1991, 214-216), Ayers (1991, 276), Wilson (1994, 170) and Loptson (2007, 369). For the claim that Locke contradicts himself, see Reid (1877, 350) and Shoemaker (1963, 46). I discuss the Reid-Shoemaker objection below.

³ Alston and Bennett (1988, 38-40), Bennett (1994, 106-108), Jolley (1999, 109-110), and Bennett (2001, 329-330).

⁴ For Law's reading, see Works 3: 179-201. Those who defend Law's reading (or something similar) include Mattern (1980), Uzgalis (1990), Lowe (1995, 114), Lowe (2005, 92-93), LoLordo (2010), Thiel (2011, 106-109 and 128-129), and Strawson (2011, 17-21 and 78-79). Bolton (2008, 116) argues that persons are not substances, but does

not take a position on whether they are modes, relations, or something else altogether (see also Bolton (1994, 116-120)).

⁵ I am here ignoring a complication that Locke considers at E II.xv.9: 201-203 and in a lengthy accompanying footnote. The complication is that Locke thinks of the idea of space or extension as simple even though it is composed of other ideas. To accommodate this classification, Locke suggests that an idea's simplicity might be compatible with its having idea-parts *of the same kind*.

⁶ For the sake of clarity, I am here glossing over the (unfortunate and confusing) fact that Locke often uses the word 'mode' to refer to ideas that represent modes. It is usually clear from the context whether Locke is using the word 'mode' to refer to a mode or to an idea of a mode, and I will assume that he would welcome any helpful disambiguation.

⁷ See Noonan (1978, 346-347).

⁸ Alston and Bennett (1988, 38-40).

⁹ See Odegard (1972), Langtry (1975), Mackie (1976), Griffin (1977), and Noonan (1978).

¹⁰ See Alston and Bennett (1988), Chappell (1989), and Uzgalis (1990). For a response to these criticisms of the relative identity interpretation, see Stuart (forthcoming).

¹¹ For example, see Locke's admission that he sometimes uses the word 'idea' to mean something in the mind and sometimes uses it to mean a quality or power in an oftentimes non-mental subject (E II.viii.8: 134).

¹² Locke does use the word 'substance' in more than one sense in the *Essay*. Sometimes he uses 'substance' to refer to ontologically independent things. It is in this sense that a human being, a sheep, and an oak tree are substances (E II.xii.6: 165). But Locke also uses 'substance' to refer to whatever it is that supports the qualities of an ontologically independent thing (or sort of thing) (E II.xxiii.1: 295). Still, aware of the possibility of confusion, Locke marks the second use of 'substance' by treating it (but not the first use of 'substance') as interchangeable with the use of 'substratum' or 'pure substance in general' (E II.xxiii.1-2: 295).

¹³ Similar remarks apply to Bolton's claim that "a person is not a substance—its identity conditions are not those of any sort of substance" (2008, 116). As I argue in the text, Locke's point is *not* that the identity conditions of a person are not those of *any* sort of substance, but rather that those identity conditions are not those of material bodies or immaterial souls. And it does not follow from *this* point that persons are not substances.

¹⁴ Interestingly, Lowe (2005, 61 and 92-93) recognizes that Locke thinks that, strictly speaking, masses of matter (aggregates of atoms) are substances in addition to atoms, finite spirits, and God. But if masses of matter are substances, then simplicity (or

ontological basicness) is no longer the fundamental criterion of substancehood, and hence it becomes difficult to see why living bodies (vegetables, animals, humans) and persons cannot be substances as well.

¹⁵ LoLordo, though “not convinced that Law’s interpretation actually *vindicates* Locke”, claims that “it does make [Locke’s] theory come out rather better than is typically imagined” (2010, 643). Thiel writes that “Law’s account of Locke’s theory remains one of the best to this day” (2011, 205). Strawson credits Law with “an essentially correct account of Locke’s position” (2011, 2—see also 20-21).

¹⁶ The fact that Locke recommends *Of the Law of Nature and Nations* as part of the best education for a gentleman (both in *Some Thoughts Concerning Reading and Study for a Gentleman* (*Works* 3: 296) and in *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* 186 (*Works* 9: 176)) is insufficiently probative. For he recommends *Of the Law of Nature and Nations* for “instruct[ion] in the natural rights of men, and the original and foundations of society, and the duties resulting from thence”, none of which concerns the nature of persons or moral entities more generally. And he recommends a number of works with parts of which he disagrees, calling some recommended works better than others.

¹⁷ Thiel or Strawson might argue in reply that from Pufendorf Locke borrowed the mode conception of persons but not the conception of modes as properties arbitrarily imposed by finite intelligences. In the absence of independent evidence for it, such a reply would be *ad hoc*.

¹⁸ Here is another passage in which Locke makes a similar point with the idea of gold as an example: “[T]he complex *Ideas* of Substances, being made up of such simple ones as are supposed to co-exist in Nature, every one has a right to put into his complex *Idea*, those Qualities he has found to be united together. For though in the Substance *Gold*, one satisfies himself with Colour and Weight, yet another thinks Solubility in *Aqua Regia*, as necessary to be joined with that Colour in his *Idea* of Gold, as any one does its Fusibility; Solubility in *Aqua Regia*, being a Quality as constantly join’d with its Colour and Weight, as Fusibility, or any other; others put in its Ductility or Fixedness, *etc.* as they have been taught by Tradition, or Experience. Who of all these, has establish’d the right signification of the Word *Gold*? Or who shall be the Judge to determine? Each has his Standard in Nature, which he appeals to, and with Reason thinks he has the same right to put into his complex *Idea*, signified by the word *Gold*, those Qualities, which upon Trial he has found united; as another, who has not so well examined, has to leave them out; or a third, who has made other Trials, has to put in others. For the Union in Nature of these Qualities, being the true Ground of their Union in one complex *Idea*, Who can say, one of them has more reason to be put in, or left out, than another?” (E III.ix.13: 483).

¹⁹ Here LoLordo echoes the main argument of Mattern (1980). My response to LoLordo here will also serve as a response to Mattern’s article.

²⁰ Locke writes: “*Person*, as I take it, is the name for this *self*. Where-ever a Man finds, what he calls *himself*, there I think another may say is the same *Person*” (E II.xxvii.26: 346).

²¹ Gordon-Roth (2012, chapter 3) argues (convincingly, to my mind) that the unity of modes is not in fact mind-dependent, and that the passages (such as E II.xxii.4: 289) that might be read to suggest the mind-dependence of the unity of *modes* instead suggest the mind-dependence of the unity of *ideas that represent modes*.

²² Gordon-Roth (2012, chapter 3) argues that Locke commits explicitly to the claim that persons have powers in the following passage: “So that *Liberty is not an Idea belong to Volition*, or preferring; but to the Person having the Power of doing, or forbearing to do, according as the Mind shall chuse or direct” (E II.xxi.10: 238). However, this is very likely a passage in which Locke is using the word ‘person’ in the ordinary sense, to refer to a human being. For Locke’s conclusion that “*Liberty [belongs] to the Person*” having the power to do as he wills is derived from his consideration of the “locked room” scenario, which is described not as one in which a *person* is carried into a locked room, but as one in which a “Man” is carried into such a room: “Again, suppose a Man be carried, whilst fast asleep, into a Room, where is a Person he longs to see and speak with...” (Notice, too, that the word ‘person’ here is also probably being used in its ordinary sense.)