

On Earth As It Is in Heaven: Trinitarian Influences on Locke's Account of Personal Identity¹

JOHN BARRESI

Dalhousie University

Introduction

John Locke's discussion of personal identity in the 1694 (second) edition of his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* has had enormous influence on subsequent discussions of personal identity down to our own times. Almost all modern discussions of the concept of person look back to Locke, and only to Locke, as their starting point. It is as if Locke were the first person ever to consider the topic of personal identity, though this is certainly not the case. In fact, the concept of person, and what determines the nature and identity of persons, has had a long history in Western thought. However, what truly marks the difference between this history and Locke's discussion is that most of the previous discussion of persons occurred in the context of heavenly rather than earthly matters. The most intense discussions of the nature and identity of persons were tied to supernatural questions: How could the same human person arise again at the resurrection? How do angels, or heavenly persons, differ from human persons? How is it possible for three distinct persons to be one God? How can Christ be a person who is both man and God?

With the exception of the problem of the resurrection, these questions tend to focus on distinctions concerning spiritual rather than human persons. And even the problem of the resurrection, which comes closest to the problem of personal identity in the Lockean sense, focuses on heavenly rather than earthly continuity. Now, while it is certainly the case that Locke himself was concerned about the resurrection when he constructed his account of personal identity, many of his modern followers are not so concerned, adopting instead his notion of personal identity based on consciousness for purely earthly concerns. Nevertheless, if we are to understand Locke's revolu-

tion with regard to the grounds for personal identity in their true historical context, we must see it with reference to the questions concerning heavenly as well as earthly persons that dominated debate about the nature of persons and their identity in the seventeenth century.

A key influence on these debates was Descartes, whose theory of a fundamental dualism between thinking and extended substances had important ramifications throughout the century, eventually overthrowing traditional Aristotelian metaphysics. During the process of this transition, a number of other metaphysical positions would be discussed, such as Hobbes's pure materialism, the atomism of Gassendi, and the neo-Platonic responses of the Cambridge Platonists, not to mention various transformations of the Cartesian position. Most of these metaphysical positions appeared before Locke wrote his *Essay* and influenced his thoughts on what could be known about the material and spiritual worlds. But they also influenced another metaphysical debate—one dealing with the concept of person as it applies to God. It is this latter metaphysical debate on which I wish focus. I will try to show how it led to a new Cartesian conception of person—one that had a direct influence on Locke's discussion of personal identity in his new "Identity and Diversity" chapter published in the 1694 edition of his *Essay*.

The debate over the nature of God, and whether three persons could be one God, reached its zenith in the 1690s in Britain, during the very years, between the first and second editions of Locke's *Essay*, when Locke must have formulated the position he presents in the second edition. And Locke himself was immediately drawn into the debate over the Trinity. He was drawn into it, indirectly, when John Toland and Francis Gastrell used his ideas, respectively, to reject and to explain the trinity of persons. And he was drawn into it, directly, when Bishop Stillingfleet, in his own vindication of the Trinity, blamed Locke for Toland's use, in his *Christianity Not Mysteious*, of Locke's way of clear and distinct ideas in order to dismiss the Trinity as incomprehensible and impossible.²

Despite Stillingfleet's accusation against Locke, the suggestion that three persons in one God is a rationally impossible idea did not have to wait for the arrival of Lockean ideas. In fact, as far back as Servetus, in the sixteenth century, Protestant theologians were questioning whether three persons could make one unified and personal God. Followers of Servetus and Socinus, who called themselves Socinians, and later Unitarians, believed that God was a unitary person, and that only the Father could be true God, with debate ensuing over what to make of the Son and Holy Spirit. The Socinians had been a minor sect in England since early in the seventeenth century, but they

burst onto the scene with a series of tracts in the 1680s and 1690s. These anti-Trinitarian tracts produced a counterblast of Trinitarian defences, all of which tried to make rational sense out of the mystery of three persons in one God. But what really raised the stakes of the conflict was that these Trinitarian defenders began to debate among themselves, accusing each other of heresies of various traditional forms, while the Socinians, or Unitarians, gleefully facilitated the internecine warfare. By 1696, things got so out of hand that the king himself had to interpose a cease-fire on the debate and require all to use only traditional language to discuss the Trinity.³

William Sherlock and the Trinitarian Debate

The person at the center of this controversy was William Sherlock, dean of St. Paul's cathedral, and one of the most philosophical of the theologians of his time. It is mainly his views on the Trinity that I believe had an influence on Locke. In 1690—six months after the first edition of Locke's *Essay* came out—Sherlock published his *Vindication of the Trinity* in an attempt to provide a rational account of the Trinity that could put to rest the Socinian objection that God was a unity that could be no more than one person. In his theory he used the relatively novel notions of self-consciousness and mutual consciousness: self-consciousness to distinguish the persons of the Trinity, and mutual consciousness to account for their unity in the Godhead. In presenting this view, Sherlock expressed—for the first time—a conception of person and self based explicitly on unity of consciousness—the very notion that Locke would first use in his 1694 discussion of personal identity.

At first, traditional theologians were quite pleased with Sherlock's account of the Trinity and thought that they finally had an answer for the Socinians. But then, when the Socinians accused him of tritheism, a traditional theologian, Robert South, joined in and provided a vicious attack on Sherlock's work. This was followed by mayhem, where Sherlock defended himself, both anonymously and then in his own name, against the Unitarians and South, and South renewed the attack, eventually getting Sherlock's ideas formally decreed as heretical at Oxford. Sherlock answered this decree belligerently (*Modest*), and it was at this time that the king had to intervene in order to quiet things down. After this, Sherlock partially retreated from his position in several more publications, of which the last (*Present*) provided a history of the debate and also attempted to provide a traditional account of the Trinity by tracing its entire history, while, at the same time, still suggesting that his innovations need not be viewed as tritheistic. Despite Sherlock's final attempt

to explain himself, most interpreters of Sherlock's retreat saw him as swinging back from tritheism to sabellianism, the traditional heresy that assumed that God was a singular being who appeared in three modes.⁴ Although I am not convinced that Sherlock fully forfeited his original position, I will not try to defend him here. My goal is to present and explicate his original view, and to show how it may have influenced Locke.

But before going into Sherlock's original view of the Trinity, it is worthwhile to consider the range of other views of the Trinity, and of the nature of persons, which were being considered at this time. It is only in this way that we can see the turmoil in the metaphysical discussion of the concept of person that occurred in the seventeenth century, which ultimately resolved itself in the conception of person based on unity of consciousness, first presented by Sherlock and subsequently developed by Locke in his influential chapter on identity. In one of the Socinian works, published in 1693, that critiqued Sherlock along with other recent attempts at explicating the Trinity, there is a nice description of these alternative views that, though presented in terms of their seventeenth-century exponents, nicely provides a mini-history of metaphysical concepts of person that have been influential in Western thought. The author writes:

For Memory and Method's sake, and because the Division is so *just*; we may distinguish the Accounts, or Explications of the Trinity contrived by our Opposers; after this manner. There is, first, the *Trinity according to Tully*, or the *Ciceronian Trinity*; which maketh the three Divine Persons, to be nothing else but three *Conceptions* of God; or God *conceived of* as the Creator, the Redeemer, and Santifier of his Creatures. Dr. *Wallis*, after many others, hath propounded and asserted this Trinity, in his Letters, and his Sermons. (Nye 10)

John Wallis, who also published a defence of the Trinity in 1690, had used a triangle as a metaphor for the Trinity, and had suggested that the word "person" was an arbitrary designation, and so substituted "three somewhats," a term repeatedly used in attacks on this view, which had its origin in Cicero's conception of person as a role or mode of activity of an individual.

The second view of the Trinity to be distinguished here was the one proposed by Sherlock:

The next is the *Cartesian Trinity*, or *Trinity according to Descartes*: which maketh three Divine Persons, and three Infinite *Minds, Spirits* and *Beings*, to be but one God; because they are mutually, and internally, and universally *conscious to each others Thoughts*. Mr. *Des Cartes* had made this

Inventum to be the first Principle and Discovery in Philosophy, *Cogito, ergo sum; I think, therefore I am*: and he will have the very Nature of a Mind or Spirit to consist in this, that 'tis a *thinking Being*. Therefore, says Dr. *Sherlock*, three Persons can be no otherways one God, but by Unity of Thought; or what will amount to as much, as internal and perfect *Consciousness to one anothers Thoughts*. Any one may see, that Dr. *Sherlock's Mutual Consciousness*, by which he pretends to explain his *Trinity in Unity*, was by him borrowed from the Meditations and Principles of Monsieur *Des Cartes*. (Nye 10)

It is important to note here that *Sherlock's* accuser is indicating that Descartes is the original source for his viewpoint, not Locke. Although there are innovations in *Sherlock's* views compared to Descartes's, it is fair to say that Descartes was the originator of the view of person that *Sherlock* adopts to explicate the Trinity or, for that matter, of the view of person that Locke, himself, adopts. But more on this shortly. First let us consider the remaining views given by Trinitarians to explicate the Trinity that are here under attack.

The Third is *the Trinity of Plato*, or the *Platonick Trinity*; maintained by Dr. *Cudworth*, in his *Intellectual System*. This Trinity is of three Divine Co-eternal Persons, whereof the second and third are subordinate or inferior to the first; in Dignity, Power, and all other Qualities, except only Duration. Yet they are but one God, saith he; *because* they are not three *Principles*, but only one; the Essence of the Father being the Root, and Fountain of the Son and Spirit: and *because* the three Persons are gathered together under one Head, even the Father. (Nye 11)

Cudworth's The Intellectual System of the Universe, published in 1678, was an enormous tribute to ancient Platonic philosophy, and he expended considerable effort showing how the Platonic trinitarian ideas related to the Christian Trinity. The view he presents here was, however, attacked as Arian, because he subordinates the second and third persons to the first, as the ancient heretic Arius had done.

But more central to our present concern is the fact that *Cudworth* was the person who introduced the use of the term "consciousness" in a philosophical sense into the English language, a term he no doubt adopted from Descartes but also reasonably attributed to Plotinus.⁵ In a quotation *Cudworth* used to present Plotinus's concept of consciousness, Plotinus had written, "Nature has no grasp or consciousness of anything, but the imaging faculty has consciousness of what comes from outside; for it gives to the one who has the image the power to know what he has experienced" (Plotinus 171–72; *Cudworth* 159). *Cudworth* himself defined *consciousness* as that "which makes a Being

to be Present with it self, Attentive to its own Actions, or Animadversive of them, to perceive it self to Do or Suffer, and to have a *Fruition* or *Enjoyment* of it self” (159).

This definition is very close to the notion of reflexive consciousness used by Descartes, but here Cudworth follows Plotinus and extends the power to other animals as well. In Cudworth’s account, humans differ from other animals in being cogitative as well as conscious beings; thus, unlike other animals, they can come to know of their own existence as selves and persons by reflecting on consciousness. As we shall see more clearly later, this reflexive definition of consciousness, since it presupposes the self or person who is conscious of current acts or thoughts of self, is not the definition with which we are particularly concerned. It is the origin of the definition of self or person in terms of unity of consciousness rather than in terms of reflexive awareness, which we are attempting to trace. Nevertheless, this latter sense of consciousness developed out of this earlier sense initially defined by Cudworth.

It was not Cudworth but one of his renegade students who first used the term consciousness to define the concept of person and to use this concept in a discussion of the Trinity. In a 1685 publication, John Turner used the term to explicate a version of the Trinity that opposed Cudworth’s, though his own interpretation of the Trinity was a weird mixture of Platonic, Cartesian, and materialistic ideas.⁶ He also expended considerable effort attacking Descartes’s views. Turner extended the term consciousness beyond the simple reflexive definition of Cudworth by treating “mutual self-consciousness” as a basis for unity among the persons of the Trinity. However, his use of this term was still very much tied to Cudworth’s definition and did not quite break free of it. By contrast, Sherlock used the term consciousness in a more coherent fashion that focused directly on the issue of unity. Since Sherlock’s view is also much more likely to have influenced Locke, I will leave aside further discussion of Turner.

But first let us return now to our Socinian survey of views of the Trinity. The author continues:

The fourth is *the Trinity according to Aristotle*, or the *Aristotelian* or *Peripatetick* Trinity; which saith, the Divine Persons are one God, because they have the same *Numerical* Substance, or *one and the self-same Substance, in Number*: and tho each of the three Persons is Almighty, All-knowing, and most Good; yet ’tis *by one individual and self-same Power, Knowledge and Goodness, in Number*. This may be called also the *Reformed* Trinity, and the Trinity of *the Schools*; because the Divines of the middle Ages, *reformed* the Tritheistick and Platonick Trinity of

the *Fathers*, into this *Sabellian* Jargonry; as Dr. *Cudworth*, often and deservedly, calleth it. This is the Trinity intended by Dr. *S[ou]th*, in his *Animadversions* on Dr. *Sherlock*. . . . It never had any other Publick Authority, saith Dr. *Cudworth*, but that of the fourth Lateran Council; which is recorded by the Papists among the *General Councils*, and was convened in the Year 1215. (Nye 11)

This Trinity of Aristotle is the traditional Catholic interpretation of the Trinity, which was generally found unsatisfactory at this time by many rationalizing Protestants, who could find only Sabellianism or only a single personal God in all the discussions by the scholastics of the internal relations of persons of the Trinity. It is also the view defended by Stillingfleet in his debate with Locke. In that debate, Locke, himself, refused to take a position on the issue of the relationship between his own more earthly conception of person and the persons of the Trinity.

Our author closes his discussion with one more view:

We must add to all these, *the Trinity of the Mobile*; or the Trinity held by the common People, and by those ignorant or lazy Doctors, who in Compliance with their Laziness or their Ignorance, tell you in short, that the Trinity is an unconceivable, and therefore an inexplicable *Mystery*; and that those are as much in fault, who presume to explain it, as those who oppose it. (Nye 11)

We see here the range of ideas about the Trinity that were in discussion during this period, and some of the intensity of the debate about what the term person should mean and how the concept of consciousness as the basis of personal identity first arose in the context of this debate. It is time now to consider more fully how this Cartesian interpretation based on consciousness was developed by Sherlock so that we can then see how it might have influenced Locke.

Sherlock on the Trinity

Sherlock's account of the Trinity begins with a discussion of the limits of human knowledge, and of the difficulties in forming clear and distinct notions of the substance of things involving both matter and spirit. Because of similarities here between Locke and Sherlock, it has been suggested by John Yolton (1968) and Michael Ayers (1991) that Sherlock's discussion was influenced by Locke's then-recently published first edition of *Essay*. However, the language that Sherlock uses in his book on the Trinity is different in

style from that of Locke, and it seems to me that he could easily have found similar ideas elsewhere. In particular, Gassendi, in his *Objections* published along with Descartes' *Meditations*, raised skeptical questions about the limits of our knowledge of the substance of matter and of spirit, and Ayers himself claims that Locke's discussion of substance "is nothing other than a restatement and elaboration of the sceptical position adopted by Gassendi" (31).⁷ If it can be assumed that Locke is merely elaborating on Gassendi, why then is it necessary to suppose that Sherlock is borrowing from Locke, rather than from Gassendi, or from some other more immediate source such as Richard Baxter, who expressed similar views?⁸ In any event, in his book on the Trinity, Sherlock asserts:

It is agreed by all Men whoever considered this matter, that the essences of things cannot be known, but only their properties and qualities: The World is divided into Matter, and Spirit, and we know no more, what the substance of Matter, than what the substance of a Spirit is, though we think we know one, much better than the other: We know thus much of Matter, that it is an extended substance, which fills a space, and has distinct parts, which may be separated from each other, that it is susceptible of very different qualities, that it is hot or cold, hard or soft, &c. but what the substance of Matter is, we know not: And thus we know the essential properties of a Spirit; that it is a thinking substance, with the Faculties of Understanding and Will, and is capable of different Vertues or Vices, as Matter is of sensible qualities, but what the substance of a Spirit is, we know no more than what the substance of matter is. (*Vindication* 7–8)

Though Sherlock's language here differs from Locke's, when Sherlock writes his later *Defence* in 1694, he does mention Locke in this context: "We know nothing of a Spirit, but what we feel in our Selves, and can Philosophize no farther about it; for as Mr. *Lock* has truly observed, we can form no Idea but either from external Impressions; or internal Sensations; and therefore we can know no more of the Unity of a Spirit neither, than what we feel" (6). This is one of only two references made to Locke in Sherlock's works on the Trinity. And he seems here to be using Locke's generally admired book to support what he had previously said in his own words. So, though it is possible that Sherlock had read *Essay* before writing his first book on the Trinity, I don't agree with Ayers that the first passage, given above from Sherlock, indicates that there are "a number of Lockean touches" in Sherlock's book (Ayers 323). What appears to me to be the case is that, based on accumulated tradition, Locke and Sherlock independently arrived at the opinion that there are cer-

tain limits to human knowledge, and that this applies equally to matter and spirit. But let us return to Sherlock's first book on the Trinity.

The reason Sherlock is stressing the limits of knowledge here is that he wants to argue that there is a difference between lack of clear and distinct knowledge and contradiction. He believes that the Trinity may not be fully comprehensible but that this does not involve any logical contradiction, since the term God, or the substance of God, is not the same as the term "person." He also wants to suggest that the only way we can understand God in any clear and distinct manner is through analogy with what we do know, clearly and distinctly. And it is through our knowledge of ourselves as spirits that Sherlock believes we can come closest to understanding the Trinity of persons in God.

Sherlock begins his search for analogies to the Trinity with an inquiry into that which "makes any Substance numerically One." His discussion of what makes for identity and diversity, here, will find reverberations in Locke's own general discussion of this topic. Just as Locke will consider them in his second edition chapter, Sherlock begins by describing identity conditions for unorganized Matter: "Now in unorganized Matter it is nothing else but the union of Parts, which hang all together, that makes such a Body one; whether it be simple or compounded of different kinds of Matter, that is One numerical Body, whose Parts hang all together" (*Vindication* 48). Next he considers living beings: "In Organical Bodies, the Union of all Parts, which constitute such an organized Body, makes it One entire numerical Body, though the Parts have very different Natures and Offices" (48).

In this part of his discussion, Sherlock distinguishes between identity conditions for matter and for organic beings. Though Locke will differ in details on the identity conditions for these two categories, he will follow Sherlock in discussing them before moving on to discuss the third category of person.

Sherlock himself continues here with a discussion of the category of spirits:

In finite created Spirits, which have no Parts and no Extension neither, that we know of, no more than a Thought, or an Idea, or a Passion, have Extension or Parts, their numerical Oneness can be nothing else, but every Spirit's Unity with itself, and distinct and separate subsistence from all other created Spirits. Now this Self-unity of the Spirit, which has no Parts to be united, can be nothing else but Self-consciousness: That it is conscious to its own Thoughts, Reasonings, Passions, which no other finite Spirit is conscious to but itself: This makes a finite Spirit

numerically One, and separates it from all other Spirits, that every Spirit feels only its own Thoughts and Passions, but is not conscious to the Thoughts and Passions of any other Spirit. (48–49)

So, according to Sherlock, what distinguishes one created spirit—or person—from another is self-consciousness, a consciousness which sets a boundary on what we can “feel” of any thoughts or passions. Sherlock wants to contrast this separated or divided consciousness, which we have relative to each other as humans from the undivided consciousness, and which he believes occurs in God, by suggesting a transitional possibility:

And therefore if there were Three created Spirits so united as to be conscious to each others Thoughts and Passions, as they are to their own, I cannot see any reason, why we might not say, that Three such Persons were numerically One, for they are as much One with each other, as every Spirit is One with itself; unless we can find some other Unity for a Spirit than Self-consciousness; and, I think, this does help us to understand in some measure this great and venerable Mystery of a *Trinity in Unity*. (49)

Sherlock begins to apply this interpretation to the Trinity by first pointing out how the three Persons are distinct:

And the distinction between these Three Infinite Minds is plain according to this Notion; for they are distinguished, just as Three finite, and created Minds are, by Self-consciousness: . . . each Divine Person has a Self-consciousness of its own, and knows and feels itself (if I may so speak) as distinct for the other Divine Persons; the Father has a Self-consciousness of his own, whereby he knows and feels himself to be the Father, and not the Son, nor the Holy Ghost . . . as *James* feels himself to be *James*, and not *Peter*, nor *John*; which proves them to be distinct Persons: . . . Here is no confounding of Persons. (67)

Sherlock goes on from here to describe the undivided or interconnected consciousness in God as a special form of mutual consciousness that does not ever actually occur in created spirits:

Nor do we divide the Substance, but unite these Three Persons in One numerical Essence: for we know nothing of the unity of the Mind but self-consciousness . . . and therefore as the self-consciousness of every Person to itself makes them distinct Persons, so the mutual consciousness of all Three Divine Persons to each other makes them all but One infinite God: as far as consciousness reaches, so far the unity of a Spirit extends, for we know no other unity of a Mind or Spirit, but conscious-

ness: In a created Spirit this consciousness extends only to itself, and therefore self-consciousness makes it One with itself, and divides and separates it from all other Spirits; but could this consciousness extend to other Spirits, as it does to itself, all these Spirits, which were mutually conscious to each other, as they are to themselves, though they were distinct Persons, would be essentially One. (68)

The key idea in Sherlock's account is that consciousness is the basis of unity of a self, as well as the basis of the unity of God. As we shall see shortly, Locke adopts almost exactly the language that Sherlock uses here when he suggests that, "as far as consciousness reaches, so far the unity of a Spirit extends, for we know of no other unity of Mind or Spirit, but consciousness." In the case of both of these authors, such phrases indicate a shift away from a simple reflexive interpretation of consciousness that presupposes the self toward a conception of unity of consciousness by which we can know the boundaries of what constitutes the self.

It is also worth noting that what Sherlock describes here—of several self-conscious agents knowing each other's thoughts as well as their own—is a phenomenon that actually occurs in some cases of multiple personality. Such cases involve several personalities that are mutually conscious to each other's thoughts while at the same time conscious of their own thoughts as distinct from the other's thoughts. It is as if each thought is tagged with the identity of the self whose thought it is. Yet, there are several co-conscious subjects who have thoughts and who are aware of (though do not experience responsibility for) each other's thoughts. Sherlock has a somewhat different interpretation of mutual consciousness in the Godhead. For the divine persons, there is a kind of cooperation in each other's thoughts and activities not found in multiples. They not only are aware of each other's thoughts, but also cooperate with each other by entering into each other's thoughts and engaging in joint actions. And it is just through this mutual consciousness and cooperation that the three persons become constituted as one God. Nevertheless, because they remain distinctly conscious of the difference between their own thoughts and the thoughts of the other divine persons, they also maintain distinct personalities.

Rather than following further Sherlock's interpretation of the mystery of the Trinity, it is worthwhile at this point to return from heaven to earth and to consider more carefully how Sherlock's views of personal identity and its relationship to consciousness in finite as well as infinite substances relate to those found in Locke.

Locke on Consciousness and Personal Identity

Locke's use of the term consciousness shifts dramatically between the first and second editions of *Essay*. In the first edition he uses the term "conscious" often but the term "consciousness" only four times and offers the following definition: "Consciousness is the perception of what passes in a man's own mind" (II, I, 8, 115). This definition is essentially the same as the one first introduced into English by Cudworth, and both are based on Descartes's definition of thought found in the *Appendix* to the *Replies* to the *Second Set of Objections* to the *Meditations*. There, Descartes writes: "Thought. I use this term to include everything that is within us in such a way that we are immediately conscious of it. Thus all the operations of the will, the intellect, the imagination and the senses are thoughts" (113).

Though Cudworth had replaced Descartes's term "thought" with the term "consciousness," he imbued this term with essentially the same meaning, a meaning that appears in the *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) as the fourth definition of consciousness: "The state or faculty of being conscious, as a condition and concomitant of all thought, feeling, and volition" (I, 522). Not surprisingly, the *OED* gives Cudworth and then Locke's first edition use above as earliest-use examples of this definition. However, as I have already indicated, this is not the definition of consciousness that is of particular concern to us here.

But before going onto to another *OED* definition—the fifth, which is directly related to unity of consciousness—let us first consider how Locke's early discussions of personal identity require only the use of this fourth definition. Prior to the appearance of Sherlock's book on the *Trinity*, Locke had already discussed the issue of personal identity in a less developed form in his notebooks and in the first edition of *Essay*. In 1683, in his notebooks, he gives his first definition of personal identity: "Identity of persons lies . . . in the memory and knowledge of one's past self and actions continued on under the consciousness of being the same person whereby every man ownes himself" (Ayers 255). The use of the term consciousness in this definition is of the form in definition 4 in the *OED*. Here consciousness is a faculty by which we know the mental acts that belong to self, but consciousness is not here the means by which the self is itself constituted. In the first edition of *Essay*, he makes a similar use of the concept of consciousness in his only discussion of personal identity: "If the soul doth think in a sleeping man without being conscious of it, I ask, whether during such thinking it has any pleasure or

pain, or be capable of happiness or misery? . . . For if we take wholly away all consciousness of our actions and sensations, especially of pleasure and pain, and the concernment that accompanies it, it will be hard to know wherein to place personal identity” (II, I, II, 110).

Again we have a reflexive use of consciousness as the basis of personal identity. If we are not reflexively aware of an experience, how can it be ours? These two definitions of personal identity are mirror images of each other. The earlier one defines it in terms of reflexive consciousness in a positive sense (i.e., those acts or thoughts that we can recognize as our own through reflexive consciousness), while the later one defines it in terms of reflexive consciousness in a negative sense (i.e., those acts or thoughts we cannot recognize as our own through reflexive consciousness).

These two reflexive or facultative uses of the term consciousness are to be contrasted with the definition of personal identity that Locke gives in the 1694 edition of *Essay*, which shows an intimate connection to Sherlock’s account of personal identity. And both of these accounts of personal identity use consciousness in the sense of the *OED*’s fifth definition of consciousness: “The totality of the impressions, thoughts, and feelings which make up a person’s conscious being. In plural = conscious personalities” (I, 522).

Note that this definition does not explicitly invoke reflexive awareness; rather, the focus is on the collective or unified nature of the conscious acts of a person. The first citation the *OED* gives for this definition comes from Locke’s second edition chapter “Identity and Diversity”: “If the same consciousness can be transferr’d from one thinking Substance to another, it will be possible that two thinking Substances may make but one Person” (I, 522; Locke II, 27, 13, 337).

As in the fifth definition, this example does not explicitly invoke reflexive awareness. Rather, it presupposes that sameness of consciousness is what determines identity of person. Locke also gets early credit in the *OED* for another crucial concept that appears in this same second edition chapter: the term “self.” The *OED*’s third “mostly philosophical” definition of self is “that which in a person is really and intrinsically he (in contradistinction to what is adventitious); the ego (often identified with the soul or mind as opposed to the body); a permanent subject of successive and varying states of consciousness” (II, 2715). Here the *OED* employs two quotations from Locke’s second edition chapter: “Since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and ’tis that, that makes everyone be, what he calls self. . . .” (II, 27, 9, 335) and “Self is that conscious thinking thing, whatever Substance, made up of Spiritual, or Material, simple or compounded, it matters not, which is sen-

sible, or conscious of Pleasure and Pain, . . . and so is concern'd for it self, as far as that consciousness extends" (II, 27, 17, 341).

In both of these instances, as well as in the definition, it is through consciousness that the self is defined rather than the reverse. It is the subject of the states of consciousness that are unified by the consciousness, rather than by a reflexive self-awareness. Further, note that the second quotation from Locke even includes the phrase "as far as that consciousness extends," a phrase which appeared first in Sherlock.

Indeed, these definitions of consciousness and self in the *OED*, though citing Locke as their first source, could equally well have cited Sherlock, who used the terms in much the same way, four years before they appeared in Locke's second edition. Moreover, that there is dependence between these later appearances in Locke to those in Sherlock is made even clearer when we consider Locke's second edition definition of personal identity:

For since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that which 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 it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done. (II, 27, 9, 335)

This final definition, which has become the primary source for subsequent discussions of personal identity since Locke wrote this passage, finds such a close parallel to Sherlock's formulation (i.e., "as far as consciousness reaches, so far the unity of a Spirit extends, for we know no other unity of a Mind or Spirit, but consciousness"), that it almost certainly draws on Sherlock's highly visible and contentious work. It is clear from Locke's correspondence, as well as from the catalogues of his library that Locke knew of Sherlock's work.⁹ And the fact that Locke's entire discussion of identity and diversity in the second edition of *Essay* so closely parallels Sherlock's earlier book strongly suggests that Locke must have reflected on that work when developing his own theory. Hence, it seems certain that what ultimately became an earthly conception of self and personal identity had its original source in a discussion of heavenly persons.¹⁰

The Aftermath

Locke's discussion of personal identity, along with the rest of his *Essay*, had an enormous impact on the eighteenth century. It is primarily through Locke's use of the term consciousness in this context that the term came under general use both in England and on the Continent (see Davies). Prior to Locke, continental philosophers had difficulties finding just the right word to use to represent the philosophical concept of consciousness. Although Descartes initiated the modern use of the Latin term *conscientia* for consciousness in its reflexive or facultative sense, the French version of the term—*conscience*—was too easily confused with conscience rather than consciousness. However, with the English differentiation of the two terms, and with the development of the concept of consciousness to reflect personal unity in Locke, translations of his work had the impact of carrying the new meaning of this term, as well as the term itself, back to France and to Germany. By the middle of the eighteenth century, consciousness had become an important technical term in the newly developed discipline of the philosophy of mind. Martin and Barresi have argued that this new concept of a self-conscious mind was a naturalization of the previous concept of the soul, and that Locke's views on personal identity were crucial to the development of this empirical philosophy of mind. The impact of this conception of the mind based on consciousness was so thorough that by the mid-nineteenth century, when mental philosophy transformed into scientific psychology, this discipline was initially defined as the science of consciousness. What was only hinted at in Descartes's metaphysical doubts had become a reality, though this reality would be a short-lived one, eventually becoming replaced by more materialistic scientific perspectives and the recognition of unconscious mental phenomena. Nevertheless, consciousness still plays a critical role in our concept of mind and what it is to be a person. And the general recognition of the importance of consciousness in our modern concept of person has, during the three centuries since the 1690s not only affected how we conceive of human persons but of divine persons as well.

When Sherlock used the concept of consciousness to explicate the Trinity, the immediate response was to declare him a tritheist. This accusation was made because he openly asserted that the three persons were three self-conscious agents with infinite minds; hence, he said that there were three infinite minds in God. While Sherlock saw this as an inevitable result of the fact that each person has their own mind—and in this case their minds were infinite—both Socinians and Trinitarians felt that Sherlock's position here

went against the conventional rule that the persons in God were to be described as having only relative properties with respect to each other and not any absolute properties, which only apply to the Godhead as a whole. Hence, although God could have an infinite mind by this logic, none of the persons themselves could have one without becoming, thereby, three Gods. Sherlock eventually tried to back off of his position, but he didn't satisfy his antagonists. As a result, Sherlock's positive account of the Trinity went without any followers. Even the poet-philosopher-theologian Samuel T. Coleridge, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, who read Sherlock in the original and made marginal notes on his *Vindication of the Trinity*, viewed Sherlock as a tritheist. Coleridge nevertheless tried to develop his own related account of the Trinity, based on what he called the "personicity" of the Godhead, by which he meant the ultimate source of subjectivity and self-consciousness in God.

Coleridge was not alone in developing something like Sherlock's account of the Trinity. Throughout the nineteenth century, theologians tried to develop accounts of God's consciousness and how the three persons could emerge as parts of a single self-consciousness. By the twentieth century, even traditional Catholic theologians were developing accounts not very different from Sherlock's. For instance, Father Lonergan, one of the more philosophical of Catholic theologians, developed an account of the persons in the Godhead that recognized each as a self-conscious person. He writes, "A divine person is a subject that is distinct and conscious of itself, both as subject and as distinct" (296–97). He adds, in a phrase that seems very reminiscent of Sherlock's mutual consciousness, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit through one real consciousness are three conscious subjects conscious of themselves and of the others and of their act" so that "a conscious Father consciously understands, knows, wills; a conscious Son consciously understands, knows, wills; a conscious Spirit consciously understands, knows, wills" (298–99).

Lonergan's position has not been uniformly accepted by Catholic theologians and has been thought by some to represent a tritheistic trend in interpretation of the Trinity that resulted from modern developments in the concept of person. Nevertheless, unlike that warfare generated around Sherlock's position, current discussion of the Trinity is on a friendlier basis. It is recognized that the Trinity is ultimately a mystery and that all discussion of the persons-in-unity can only be a metaphorical attempt to relate human personality and society to heavenly personality and society. While the debate over terms continues, the goals are the same: to relate earth to heaven and heaven to earth and to learn more about our selves and of our relations to God in the process.

NOTES

1. The present article is based originally on a talk first presented at the philosophy department at Dalhousie University on February 13, 1998. A later, revised version of the talk was given at the Fifth International Conference on the Person, Santa Fe, August 4, 1999. I wish to thank listeners to both of these talks for their stimulating comments, which led to revisions of the current article. I would also like to thank the Research Development Fund of Dalhousie University, and the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, for grants that supported research that contributed to writing this article. Requests for reprints should be sent to: John Barresi, Department of Psychology, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS, Canada B3H 4J1, or to jbarresi@dal.ca.

2. See Yolton for Locke's involvement in the trinitarian controversy.

3. See Wallace, Redwood ch. 7 for this history.

4. See South *Animadversions* and *Tritheism*; Sherlock *Modest* and *Present*; see Wallace for the history of this controversy around Sherlock.

5. See Thiel.

6. See Ayers for a discussion of Turner's views.

7. See Yolton.

8. "For to tell the truth, I know nothing at all without the mediation of sense except the immediate sensation itself. . . . Now hence I infer, that I have no sense at all of the difference of a Spirits Substantiality in such modes and accidents from that of Matter, and therefore how can I know it?" (15).

9. The most direct evidence that Locke read Sherlock's *Vindication* before he wrote his second edition account of personal identity is a letter written in October 1690 to Locke from Holland, thanking him for forwarding Sherlock's book in a packet along with other books. Although we do not have Locke's side of their correspondence, Sherlock's opinion on the Trinity, along with those of the Socinians and South, are briefly discussed in subsequent letters written by this correspondent—apparently under the assumption that Locke has also read these works, well before Locke began his revisions of *Essay*. See De Beer, letters 1325, 1329, 1344, 1351, and 1702. In addition, the catalogues of Locke's library show that he owned copies of most of the books involved in the Trinitarian debate, including a later edition of Sherlock's book, as well as several critiques of his theory that were published before Locke wrote the second edition chapter on Identity and Diversity. See Harrison and Laslett, and Wedeking.

10. Because of limitations of space, I cannot go into a more detailed comparison of Sherlock and Locke's views. Nor can I show how their use of the term "consciousness" was sufficiently ambiguous between the two senses described here to such an extent that many of their critics claimed circularity was involved in their attempts to invoke the second sense of consciousness to constitute the self. See Wedeking for a discussion of circularity in both Sherlock and Locke.

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