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# Sameness, Persons, and the Resurrection Debates between Locke, Stillingfleet, Holdsworth, and Trotter Cockburn

Anita van der Bos



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### Article abstract

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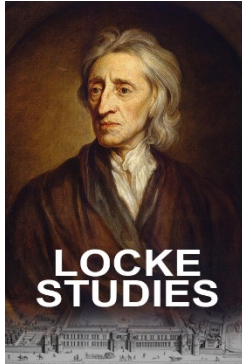
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## Sameness, Persons, and the Resurrection: Debates between Locke, Stillingfleet, Holdsworth, and Trotter Cockburn

ANITA VAN DER BOS (UNIVERSITY OF GRONINGEN)

### *Abstract:*

According to Locke, scripture says nothing about the resurrection of the same body. We will be resurrected. But in what sense can resurrected Jane be the “same” as living Jane? Throughout his thinking, Locke holds that sameness of body and/or sameness of soul are not required for the resurrection of “the same Jane.” Sameness of person is required. Locke’s theory of personal identity was ground-breaking in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It was provoking and resulted in a wave of critical responses. His distinction between “man” and “person” is important for his account of personal identity, but the distinction was hard for his contemporaries to understand. The correspondence between Locke and Edward Stillingfleet, for example, shows that for Stillingfleet the distinction between “man” and “person” is artificial. Having read this correspondence, Winch Holdsworth attacks Locke in a sermon in 1719 arguing that Locke denied the resurrection altogether. Catharine Trotter Cockburn tries to defend Locke in her *Vindication*. Despite her clear understanding of the distinctions applied by Locke, she too struggles with what to make of a person.

**Keywords:** John Locke, Edward Stillingfleet, Catharine Trotter Cockburn, Winch Holdsworth, diachronic identity, personal identity, resurrection

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## 1. Introduction

In the early modern period, there was a widespread belief in the resurrection. A common conception was that humans need to receive at the resurrection the same body they had during life, else their revivification cannot be called a resurrection.<sup>1</sup> The doctrine of the resurrection of the same body raises the question what sameness of body amounts to. In the early modern period “same body” was interpreted in many different ways.<sup>2</sup> It may even be said that “the very notion of sameness was soaked in ambiguity.”<sup>3</sup> Various theories evolved around diachronic identity, or identity over time, in which the resurrection became a special case study. It was difficult enough to explain how an ever-changing body nevertheless stays the same over a period of time. But it was really challenging to provide an explanation for the identity between our living and resurrected body. There is a “gap” in the existence of such a body, in the sense that there is a period in which the body does not exist.

In what sense am I “the same” before and after the resurrection? Do I need to have the same body, the same soul, or both? Or will I have to be the same person? Throughout his thinking, John Locke (1632–1704) holds that sameness of body and/or sameness of soul are not required for the resurrection. Sameness of person is required. It is a supposed advantage of Locke’s view that it can explain the sense of sameness in the resurrection. Locke argues that is the same person that is resurrected, because consciousness can have a “gappy” or interrupted existence as opposed to living bodies.<sup>4</sup> Locke’s position was provoking and resulted in a wave of critical responses. For Locke’s contemporaries it was a bitter pill to swallow that the body has no role to play in the resurrection of the person. They also took issue with the fact that the soul lost its significance. Locke’s distinction between “man” and “person” is important for his account of personal identity, but the distinction was hard for his contemporaries to understand. Winch Holdsworth (1679–1761), for example, attacks Locke in a sermon in 1719, arguing that on Locke’s account there cannot be a resurrection.<sup>5</sup> Catharine Trotter Cockburn (1679–1749) tries to defend

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, John Pearson, *An Exposition of the Creed*, 4th ed. (London, 1676), 381.

<sup>2</sup> Catharine Trotter Cockburn, *A Letter to Dr. Holdsworth* (London, 1723), 42. [subsq: *Letter*].

<sup>3</sup> Lucia Dacome, “Resurrecting by Numbers in Eighteenth-Century England,” *Past & Present* 193, no. 1 (November 2006): 84, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pastj/gtl018>.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel Kaufman, “The Resurrection of the Same Body and the Ontological Status of Organisms: What Locke Should Have (and Could Have) Told Stillingfleet,” in *Contemporary Perspectives on Early Modern Philosophy*, ed. Owen Hoffman (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2008), 211.

<sup>5</sup> Winch Holdsworth, *A Sermon Preached before the University of Oxford at St. Mary’s on Easter-Monday, 1719* (Oxford, 1720), 117. [subsq: *Sermon*].

Locke in her *Vindication*.<sup>6</sup> Despite her clear understanding of the distinctions applied by Locke, she too struggles with what to make of a person.

The root of this difficulty lies in Locke's own thinking about persons, organisms, and bodies. The question of what kind of thing a person is, was already a matter of debate in Locke's time. A person is not a body and also not a soul, but what it exactly is remains obscure. To this day there is no definitive answer to the question of whether Locke thought of a person as a mode (a feature of something else) or a kind of substance. Not only is it unclear whether persons are substances or modes, but Locke shifts between thinking of organisms as substances or modes as well. In the *Essay* Locke seems to say that organisms are substances, i.e., bodies. In his correspondence with Edward Stillingfleet (1635–1699), however, he seems to hold that organisms are modes and, therefore, not bodies.<sup>7</sup>

## 2. Sameness of Body in the *Essay*

In his *Essay* chapter on identity Locke expresses his view that sameness of body or soul is not required for the resurrection.<sup>8</sup> In this same chapter Locke explains what makes an atom, a mass of matter, an organism, and a person the same over a period of time. An atom is “a continued Body under one immutable Superficies, existing in a determined time and place.”<sup>9</sup> A mass of matter is formed when “two or more Atoms be joined together into the same Mass.”<sup>10</sup> It is commonly believed that Locke is a mereological essentialist in the case of masses.<sup>11</sup> This means that all the parts of an object are essential to that object. A mass of matter cannot survive any gaining or losing of parts. However, a mass will survive any internal rearrangement of its parts.<sup>12</sup> Imagine having a piece of clay that you decide to put in a blender. The clay is mixed, but what you take out of the blender is the same mass. However, the clay ceases to be the same if one atom stays behind. The discussion becomes more complicated in the case of living beings. Locke discusses trees, animals, and humans. What is interesting here is that all living things persevere because they change. What constitutes the identity of organisms is their biological life and this

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<sup>6</sup> Catharine Trotter Cockburn, *A Vindication of Mr. Locke's Christian Principles, from the Injurious Imputations of Dr. Holdsworth*, in *Works*, 1:155–378. [Subsq: *Vindication*].

<sup>7</sup> Kaufman, “The Resurrection of the Same Body,” 192–93, 207.

<sup>8</sup> John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. Peter H. Nidditch, The Clarendon Edition of the Works of John Locke (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2011), 2.27.1–28. [subsq: *Essay*].

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid*, 2.27.3.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Kaufman, “Locke's Theory of Identity,” in *A Companion to Locke*, ed. Matthew Stuart (Chichester, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2015), 239.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*.

includes governing the changing parts of an organism. For Locke the identity of the human body “consists in nothing but a participation of the same continued Life, by constantly fleeting Particles of matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized Body.”<sup>13</sup> It is the continuous succession of parts that allows us to say that an infant boy, a grown man, and a man at the end of his life are the same. Locke distinguishes between masses of matter and organized bodies, the latter of which include artifacts<sup>14</sup> (e.g., a watch) and living organisms<sup>15</sup> (e.g., an oak and a man).

Locke defines a person as “a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places.”<sup>16</sup> One of the main elements that Locke wants to make clear is that personal identity is not like the identities of body or soul. Locke argues that whether we are the same body or soul is not a question applicable to personal identity. He illustrates this with the example of the prince and the cobbler. The consciousness of the prince “enter[s] and inform[s] the Body of a Cobler.”<sup>17</sup> According to Locke we should think that the cobbler is now the same person as the prince and is accountable for the prince’s actions. For any bystander, however, the cobbler would still be the cobbler because he looks like he always did. The cobbler, on the other hand, would no longer consider himself to be the cobbler but the prince instead. Hence, it is not the identity of the body that makes the person. Personal identity is preserved by a person’s consciousness, even though its substance changes.

A positive outcome of Locke’s view is that it can account for a sense of sameness between the living and resurrected person. The same continued life is necessary for the diachronic identity of an organism. Such a life cannot continue between the living body and the resurrected body because life ends when the organism dies. This is why Locke argues that it is the same person that is resurrected, because consciousness can have an interrupted existence.<sup>18</sup>

### 3. Sameness of Body in the Stillingfleet Correspondence

After publishing his *Essay*, Locke entered into a discussion with Stillingfleet about the resurrection of the same body. Stillingfleet took issue with Locke’s concept of personhood and argued that its implications for the doctrine of the resurrection go against revealed

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<sup>13</sup> Locke, *Essay*, 2.27.6. Locke makes a similar point in the case of plants. The identity of a plant lies in “that particular concrete existing constantly from that moment both forwards and backwards in the same continuity of insensibly succeeding parts.” *Essay*, 2.27.4.

<sup>14</sup> Locke, *Essay*, 2.27.5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.27.4–6.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 2.27.9.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.* 2.27.15.

<sup>18</sup> Kaufman, “The Resurrection of the Same Body,” 211.

religion. In reply to Stillingfleet Locke writes that scripture does not speak of the resurrection of the same body:

[The] words [in Scripture] I should think sufficient to deterr us from determining any thing for or against the same Body being raised at the last day. It suffices, that all the dead shall be raised, and every one appear and answer for the things done in this life, and receive according to the things he hath done in his Body, whether good or bad.<sup>19</sup>

As such, we cannot say anything for or against the resurrection of the same body. When Scripture speaks of the resurrection of the dead, what is resurrected, according to Locke, is not the same body nor the same soul, but the same person.

It is important to note that Locke makes a strict distinction between “body” and “organism” in his correspondence with Stillingfleet. In the *Essay* Locke had explained that masses require having exactly the same particles over time, but organisms do not. This shows that Locke thought of organisms as (compounded) substances. If organisms are substances, what kind of substance would they be? A possible candidate is a body, as Locke describes an animal as “a living Organized Body” and “organiz’d living Body.”<sup>20</sup> However, assuming that Locke is a mereological essentialist in the case of masses (i.e., bodies), if organisms are bodies, and if bodies stay the same so long as they don’t gain or lose any parts, then an organism cannot gain or lose any parts. However, organisms do gain and lose parts. Mereological essentialism is not true in the case of organisms. In his correspondence with Stillingfleet Locke firmly maintains that organisms don’t persist the way masses of matter do. Hence, organisms are not bodies and thus not substances.<sup>21</sup> Locke seems to suggest that organisms are modes, i.e., ways of organizing bodies. However, Stillingfleet thinks of organisms as living bodies. Having read the *Essay*, he believes that organisms are living bodies for Locke as well. Stillingfleet takes Locke to say that a living body persists for as long as the organization of its parts is such that the organism can participate in the same life. Stillingfleet then applies these same identity conditions to the resurrected body: when the resurrected body consists of parts that once belonged to the living body, and when these parts are organized in such a way that they enable the resurrected body to be alive, it is the same body. To resurrect the same body, all that is needed is a particular organization of parts, which must be united to the same soul. There is no need for consciousness, argues Stillingfleet, not for him and not for

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<sup>19</sup> John Locke, *Mr. Locke’s Reply to the Right Reverend the Lord Bishop of Worcester’s Answer to His Second Letter* (London, 1699), 178. [Subsq: *Reply to Stillingfleet’s Second Letter*].

<sup>20</sup> Locke, *Essay*, 2.27.8; See also *Essay*, 2.27.4 in which he makes use of the example of an Oak and refers to “the living Body of the Plant.”

<sup>21</sup> It is important to note that in the correspondence with Stillingfleet, Locke has ample chance to state that organisms are different from mere bodies because they are living bodies. Yet Locke never says this. He keeps maintaining that bodies are masses of matter. Discussion remains about which text should be giving priority. Kaufman, “The Resurrection of the Same Body,” 193, 207.

Locke.<sup>22</sup> Miscommunication between Locke and Stillingfleet occurs because Locke wants to use the term “body” solely to describe a “mass.” Locke does not want to speak of organisms as a kind of “body,” namely a living body. He points out that he makes a distinction between bodies and organisms:

And now I desire your Lordship to consider of what use it is to you in the present Case to quote out of my *Essay* these Words, “That partaking of one common Life, makes the Identity of a Plant,” since the Question is not about the *Identity of a Plant*, but about the *Identity of a Body*. It being a very different thing to be the *same Plant*, and to be the *same Body*. For that which makes the same Plant, does not make the same Body; the one being the partaking in the same continued vegetable life, the other the consisting of the same numerical Particles of Matter.<sup>23</sup>

What this disagreement shows is that Stillingfleet takes “organism” and “body” to be the same. Locke takes them to stand for different things. In his response to Stillingfleet, Locke fails to understand what Stillingfleet means by “same body”:

But your Lordship argues, *it must be the same Body which as you explain ... must be the same material Substance which was vitally united to the Soul here*, i.e. as I understand it, the same individual particles of Matter, which were, sometime or other during his Life here, vitally united to his Soul.<sup>24</sup>

Locke thinks that Stillingfleet means by “same material substance” a substance that consists of the exact same numerical particles. However, Stillingfleet acknowledges that a material substance changes as it gains and loses parts. It does not always consist of the exact same numerical particles. Locke thinks that Stillingfleet understands “body” in the same way as he does. However, what Stillingfleet means by “body” is what Locke means with “organism.”<sup>25</sup> Stillingfleet is talking past Locke because he does not acknowledge the distinctions between body and organism. Locke is talking past Stillingfleet because he does not understand what Stillingfleet means by “same body.” Yet he does notice that Stillingfleet does not make the same distinction between “body” and “organism” as he does.

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<sup>22</sup> Edward Stillingfleet, *The Bishop of Worcester's Answer to Mr. Locke's Second Letter; Wherein His Notion of Ideas Is Prov'd to Be Inconsistent with It Self, and with the Articles of the Christian Faith* (London, 1698), 42–43. [Subsq: *Answer to Locke's Second Letter*].

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 192–93.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 168–69.

<sup>25</sup> That is, in the context of living, or once-living, bodies. I do not want to make the claim that Stillingfleet *always* means by “body” a kind of Lockean organism.

#### 4. Holdsworth's Criticism of Locke

After reading the correspondence between Locke and Stillingfleet, the reverend Holdsworth became a critic of Locke. He was concerned about Locke's claim that Scripture does not speak of the resurrection of the same body. Like many of his contemporaries, Holdsworth thinks that the resurrection of the body is an article of faith.<sup>26</sup> He tries to argue against Locke that "the resurrection of the dead" implies the resurrection of the body. And this should not just be any body, but it should be the same body. It is interesting that Holdsworth disagrees with Locke, because Locke's view can explain the sense of sameness in the resurrection. However, a Lockean person (whose identity does not depend on bodily identity) does not suffice. According to Holdsworth, the body is the proper subject of the resurrection because it dies and can be brought back to life by reuniting it with the same soul. The same body should also be resurrected so that one can receive just reward and punishment for the things done in one's body.<sup>27</sup> For Holdsworth both the same body and the same soul are necessary to make the same man:

That Man's Soul and *Body* are not reunited, except the *Same Body* be joined to the Same Soul. He cannot be the *Same Man* otherwise. For the Same Body is as necessary to make the Same Man, as the Same Soul.<sup>28</sup>

Holdsworth states that if the same soul were to be joined to a new body, i.e., a body with no parts in common with the body before death, then we cannot speak of a resurrection.<sup>29</sup> On Locke's view it is possible that the same consciousness is joined to a completely different body than the one to which it was joined before death. We can still speak of the resurrection of the same person because identity of body or soul is irrelevant for the sameness of the person. What Holdsworth's criticism seems to be is that on Locke's view one cannot speak of a resurrection. Nothing is brought back to life that once was dead. There is no such thing as a resurrection of a person if this person is not resurrected with the same body (and soul) that belonged to this person during life.

According to Holdsworth, it is not problematic to be resurrected with the same body. Contrary to Locke, he argues that the sameness of the resurrected body should be understood in a vulgar sense:<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Winch Holdsworth, *A Defence of the Doctrine of the Resurrection of the same Body, in Two Parts*. [...] (London, 1726), 160. [Subsq: *Defence*].

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 226, 227.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 227.

<sup>29</sup> This issue comes back in various places of the *Defence*. See for example *Defence*, 226, 227 and *Sermon* 12.

<sup>30</sup> Some of Locke's interlocutors remarked that Locke's identity conditions for bodies are extremely strict. They introduced a distinction between strict and loose notions of identity, or what came to be known as "philosophical" versus "vulgar" identity. Philosophical identity is what Locke applies to bodies. A body at various moments in time is the same body when it always consists of the same numerical parts of matter.



The *Sameness* of Human *Bodies* implies, Not a Philosophical, and Mathematical *Identity*, but such a *Vulgar Sameness*, as every Man allows his own Body to have, from His Childhood, to His last Declensions; and that This *Sameness* of the Human *Body*, at the Resurrection, is grounded upon the express Words and clear Intimations of Scripture.<sup>31</sup>

Holdsworth opts for vulgar sameness of the body: “because the Scriptures speak with great Plainness and Simplicity, according to *Vulgar Notions*, and *Popular Considerations*, and were never intended to teach Us Points of *Natural Philosophy*, I say, that Mr. *Lock*’s *Philosophical*, and *Abstracted* Idea of the *Identity* of a *Body*, is, by no Means, to be agreed to, When the *Sameness* of the Resurrection *Body* is the Subject of Discourse. Because a *Philosophical*, *Abstracted Sameness* is not agreeable, so much as, to the Nature of Things, and much less to the Scriptures.”<sup>32</sup> Holdsworth rejects Locke’s “Mathematical *Identity*, because there is no such Thing in the Scriptures, or in the Nature of Things, but only in the *Ideal World*.”<sup>33</sup> Holdsworth sees no problem in his maintaining a different sense of sameness than Locke does, while trying to argue against him:

Mr. *Lock* was at Liberty to fix his Idea of *Identity*, as He pleased, and to retain it, as long as He pleased. And I, or any Man else, may demand the same Liberty. And therefore I can see no imaginable Reason, Why I may not make Use of the *Vulgar*, and *Unphilosophical* Idea of the *Same Body*, speaking of the Resurrection *Body*, as well as He makes Use of the *Abstracted*, and *Philosophical*. Especially, since the *Vulgar* is more agreeable to Scripture, and the Nature of Things, than the *Philosophical*.<sup>34</sup>

What these passages tell us is that Holdsworth knew that Locke understood something else by bodily sameness than he does. But, according to Holdsworth, vulgar bodily

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Vulgar identity is what Locke applies to organisms. This type of identity does not require a complete overlap of material parts between a body at various moments in time. An organism changes all the time as it gains and loses parts. Many of Locke’s contemporaries have this vulgar sense in mind when arguing for the resurrection of the same body. They held that the premortem body and the resurrected body can be vulgarly the same, i.e., they do not need to have the same number of particles between them. For Locke, however, for the resurrection of the same body, the identity of the body must be understood philosophically. The premortem body and the resurrection body should have all their bodily parts in common.

<sup>31</sup> Holdsworth, *Defence*, 120.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, 146.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 146–47; Holdsworth has Locke’s mereological essentialist definition of “body” in mind here.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 147–48.

sameness is the proper sense of Scripture and coincides with the common notions of men.<sup>35</sup>

Holdsworth points out that the living body is never composed of all the same particles from one moment to the next. Nevertheless, we say that the living body remains the same body during its life. Therefore, the resurrected body does not need to have completely the same particles as the living body, i.e., the sameness between the resurrected body and the living body need not be a philosophical sameness:

[T]he Resurrection *Body* is the *Same* with That, which lived before; Not by having the *Same* precise Number or Particles, but by such an *Identity* of Parts, and Particles, as is sufficient to denominate it the *Same* now, in the Common Opinion of Men.<sup>36</sup>

Holdsworth does not state which parts or how many parts are needed to deem the resurrected body the same as the living one. He leaves this up to God to decide, as he put forward in his *Sermon*:

Those Parts of the old Matter, which belonged to the Human *Body*, before Death, be They more, or less, which it pleases God to restore to Life, at the Resurrection, will be sufficient, whatever new Particles may be added, to make it as much the *Same* with That, which Died, as That which Died, was, with That, which Lived before; Or That, which Lived before, was, for any little Part of Time, the *Same* with itself.<sup>37</sup>

What this passage tells us is that the sameness-relation between the resurrected body and the dead body is the same sameness-relation as the one between the dead body and the living body, and as the sameness-relation between the living body at time one and at time two. This vulgar sameness of the body that Holdsworth maintains is what Locke applied to organisms. Philosophical sameness is what Locke applies to bodies. It seems that, for Holdsworth, any material part of the body at any moment in its life will remain available for God to use for the resurrected body. What Holdsworth does not seem to allow is that none of the living body's particles are used. If this were to happen, we would have an entirely new body at the resurrection, which by no means can be called the same.<sup>38</sup> Holdsworth believes that Locke's intention is "not only to set aside the Belief of the Resurrection of the *Same Body*, in his own Sense of *Same Body*; but to introduce also a

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<sup>35</sup> See also Holdsworth's statements in his *Defence*, 150, 159, 161.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.

<sup>37</sup> Holdsworth, *Sermon*, 8.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 157–60, 164.

Belief, that a *New Body*, united to the Soul, at the Last Day, may be properly a Resurrection *Body*.”<sup>39</sup> Holdsworth further states:

And while [Locke] acknowledges no *Sameness* of *Bodies*, but His own, and thereby leaves, not only Room to suppose, but many clear Intimations, that the Dead may be raised with *New Bodies*, which are neither the *Same* in His own, nor in any other Sense. ... For He sometimes means, that the Dead shall be raised, by having Their Souls united to *New Bodies*, and therefore in no Sense the *Same* with the Old.<sup>40</sup>

According to Locke, the resurrection is that of the same consciousness. What will be judged in the afterlife is a person, and for personal identity neither identity of body nor identity of soul is required. When Locke states that the dead may have a body at the resurrection, these bodies will be their bodies, but the kind of sameness (if any) that this body has to the living body cannot be determined by us.<sup>41</sup> We will see that Trotter Cockburn will stress this point in her response to Holdsworth.

For Holdsworth “man” and “person” stand for the same thing. In scripture “the dead” refers, according to Holdsworth, both to person and to man. This is not a person in the Lockean sense, i.e., a consciousness. Person is a body–soul compound, just as man is, and Holdsworth uses both terms interchangeably. In Holdsworth’s case we need the soul to make the body come to life. Yet the body is the proper subject of the resurrection because “[t]he Soul having always lived cannot be said to be raised from the Dead.”<sup>42</sup> For Holdsworth both the same body and the same soul are necessary to make the same man:

That Man’s Soul and *Body* are not reunited, except the *Same Body* be joined to the Same Soul. He cannot be the *Same Man* otherwise. For the Same Body is as necessary to make the Same Man, as the Same Soul.<sup>43</sup>

Holdsworth states that if the same soul were to be joined to a new body, i.e., a body with no parts in common with the body before death, we cannot speak of a resurrection.<sup>44</sup> Vulgar sameness of body and sameness of soul are thus both necessary to resurrect us to the same man or person, as for Holdsworth they mean the same.

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 158.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 160–61.

<sup>41</sup> In the *Essay* Locke points out that we will have a body at the resurrection but that it does not necessarily need to be the same. *Essay*, 2.27.15, 2.27.26.

<sup>42</sup> Holdsworth, *Defence*, 226.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 227.

<sup>44</sup> This issue comes back in various places of the *Defence*. See for example *Defence*, 226, 227 and *Sermon* 12.

## 5. Trotter Cockburn's Defense of Locke

Trotter Cockburn published works from her teenage years until her death in 1749. She was known as a playwright, but also published novellas and poetry as well as philosophical and theological works. Her correspondence is vast and consists of many intellectual discussions.<sup>45</sup> Her first philosophical work was a response to one of Locke's critics, referred to by her as "the Remarker."<sup>46</sup> She did not publish between 1707 and 1726. It was Holdsworth's critique of Locke that prompted Trotter Cockburn to pick up her pen to write her *Letter*, in which she defends Locke. Her *Vindication* was published in 1751, a few years after her death. In both her *Letter* and her *Vindication*, Trotter Cockburn defends Locke against Holdsworth's accusations of heresy and his claim that Locke denied the resurrection of the body.

What Holdsworth criticism seems to be is that on Locke's view one cannot speak of a resurrection. Nothing is brought back to life that once was dead. There is no such thing as a resurrection of a person if this person is not resurrected with the same body and soul that belonged to this person during life. Holdsworth's problem with Locke is that he seems to deny the resurrection of the body. According to Trotter Cockburn, Locke does not deny the resurrection of the body. She holds this view because she believes that Locke is committed to the resurrection of the man and that a man is a compound of body and soul. Trotter Cockburn states that the reason why Locke puts emphasis on the soul and not on the body is because all he knows is that we will get *a* body when we are resurrected, but he is not sure with what kind of body we will be resurrected.

In her reply to Holdsworth, Trotter Cockburn stresses that Locke, in his correspondence with Stillingfleet, wanted to show that the expression "the resurrection of the same body" was not to be found in Scripture. What is found in Scripture is that "the dead shall rise."<sup>47</sup> However, she points out, this does not imply that the dead will be raised without a body:

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<sup>45</sup> For biographies about Trotter Cockburn see Thomas Birch, "The Life of Mrs. Cockburn," introduction to *Works*, by Catharine Trotter Cockburn i–xlvi. Recent biographies are based on Birch's, see for example: Patricia Sheridan, introduction to *Catharine Trotter Cockburn: Philosophical Writings*, ed. Patricia Sheridan (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2006) 9–30; Anne Kelley, *Catharine Trotter: An Early Modern Writer in the Vanguard of Feminism* (Hampshire, UK: Ashgate Publishing), 1–52.

<sup>46</sup> Allegedly, Thomas Burnet (1635–1715) is the authors of the Remarks. However, there is fairly convincing evidence that he was not the author. That's why I refer to the author as 'the Remarker' as Trotter Cockburn does. See Jonathan, C. Walmsley, Hugh Craig, and John Burrows, "The Authorship of the Remarks upon an Essay concerning Humane Understanding," *Eighteenth-Century Thought* 6 (2016): 205–43.

<sup>47</sup> Trotter Cockburn, *Vindication*, 294.

Mr. *Locke* does not mean *so much* as to deny, that the body shall be raised with the same numerical particles: he *by no means denies the truth* of this, tho' he thinks it is not so plainly revealed, as to be an article of faith.<sup>48</sup>

Mr. *Locke's scepticism* ... went no further, than not pretending to determine of what particles the resurrection body shall be composed.<sup>49</sup>

In theory, it is possible that what gets resurrected on Locke's account might not be a body at all. It is not necessary that consciousness comes before the judgement seat in a body of whatever sorts. However, according to Trotter Cockburn, Locke "questions not that the dead shall be raised with bodies."<sup>50</sup> Trotter Cockburn seems to think that what dies will be resurrected. What dies is the body and thus the body gets resurrected. However, the resurrection of the man is not the resurrection of the body alone.<sup>51</sup> When stressing again that, for Locke, the dead shall rise, Trotter Cockburn explains that:

[T]he raising must be understood of that which died, the same Species, a Creature consisting of Soul and Body, the same Man must be raised at the last Day, otherwise there is no Resurrection of the Dead."<sup>52</sup>

For Trotter Cockburn a man is a union of body and soul: "it is not by the Body alone, but by a Separation of the Soul from the Body that a *Man* dies."<sup>53</sup>

In her *Vindication* she explains that the same soul makes the same man, regardless of whether the same material substance is united to it. To have a man at the resurrection we will need a body with a soul. To be able to speak of a resurrection of the dead, the dead body will have to come alive. It seems that, for Trotter Cockburn, the soul can do just that, as she defines it as the conscious principle:

We have good grounds, both from reason and Scripture, to believe, that when the soul is separated from the body, it is in a state of *perception and action*; yet it must be granted, that whatever kind of life it exists in, it is lost to, or ceases to live, the *human life*; and therefore, if, after such a separation, the soul, the same conscious principle, is again united to a human body, it may with sufficient propriety be said,

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 295.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 301; Trotter Cockburn mentions on numerous occasions that Locke does not deny the resurrection of the body. See for example *Letter*, 24, 25, 26, 39; *Vindication*, 311, 313, 324, 325, 327, 328, 330, 333, 334, 338, 344, 355, 356, 376, 373.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 304.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 302.

<sup>52</sup> Trotter Cockburn, *Letter*, 65.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 56.

that the *man* is raised from the dead, without knowing or considering, whether the body, to which the soul is united, be the very same material substance, with which it was joined before, or not.<sup>54</sup>

Trotter Cockburn makes a weaker claim than Holdsworth. According to her, *a* body will be reunited with the soul. Holdsworth, on the other hand, states that vulgarly the *same* body will be reunited with the soul. Trotter Cockburn denies that the same body (vulgarly or philosophically) is needed. As long as the same conscious principle is united to any human body, we have the same man at the resurrection. She does not deny that *some* body will be there. What is necessary for Trotter Cockburn to make the same man at the resurrection is not the same body (vulgarly or philosophically) one had during life, but the same soul:

The same soul, the same conscious principle, is so absolutely necessary to make the same man, that if we suppose another thinking substance, we entirely lose all idea of the sameness of the man: but it is not so as to the material substance, for we make no question of the sameness of the *man*, though we are sure the material part of him changes continually.<sup>55</sup>

By arguing for this, Trotter Cockburn does show that Locke does not deny the resurrection of the body. But Holdsworth criticism that there is no resurrection on Locke's view if the soul is united to a completely new body still holds. On her interpretation of Locke, a body united to the same soul makes the same man. This resurrected body might not be the one that died because there are no overlapping particles between the premortem and resurrected body.

Another point of critique of Holdsworth's is that Locke introduces a new and strange language into Scripture:

For the Resurrection of Persons is an Expression which was never known before Mr. *Lock* used it. ... Now this New Language would be strange, in any Man, But out of Mr. *Lock*'s Mouth, a Man, who would not allow any Doctrine to be revealed in Scripture, that is not There in express Words set down, it would be very unaccountable, if it were not plain, that He had a Turn to serve by it. Which was to set aside the Belief, of the Resurrection, of the Same Body.<sup>56</sup>

According to Holdsworth, Scripture never said anything about a "person" and the resurrection of such a person. He claims that Locke introduces a new language into Scripture to aid him in denying the resurrection of the same body. Trotter Cockburn counters that Locke did not introduce this new language into Scripture and states that

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<sup>54</sup> Trotter Cockburn, *Vindication*, 341.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, 342.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

Locke never spoke of the resurrection of persons.<sup>57</sup> She points out that Locke always stayed true to the words of Scripture: “he was indeed scrupulous of delivering any thing for Scripture, which was not there in express words.”<sup>58</sup> The term “person” is not to be found in Scripture. However, Trotter Cockburn answers for Locke, it can be “plainly deduced from it ... that *the same persons shall be raised*.”<sup>59</sup> She further adds:

Nor can this be strange language to any man, who reads there, *that we must all appear before the judgement-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, &c.* or, who repeats in his creed, *that all men shall rise again with their bodies, and shall give account for their own works*. For I suppose no one questions, that those *men who are to rise*, and *we*, who are to appear before the judgement of *Christ*, are *persons*; or, that those, who are to give an account of their *own works*, and to receive according to what they have done in their *bodies*, must be the *same persons* who did those works; for they are expressly distinguished from their bodies. ... Or rather, is it not the same thing to say, that *all men* shall rise again, which is the language of the creed, and that all persons shall rise again? For *men* and *persons* in common use, and Scripture language, are synonymous terms.<sup>60</sup>

It seems that Trotter Cockburn’s opinion is that Locke never spoke of the resurrection of persons because a resurrection of a person is no different than the resurrection of a man. By holding this opinion, Udo Thiel points out that Trotter Cockburn makes no distinction between the terms “man” and “person.”<sup>61</sup>

However, there are other passages from which it becomes evident that Trotter Cockburn does not equate “man” and “person.” In her defence of Locke against Holdsworth we find statements showing that Trotter Cockburn is very much aware of the distinction that Locke made when discussing the identity of various things in his *Essay*: “He had in a Chapter on the Subject of Identity told us, in what he took the identity of several things to consist, as that of the same Plant, the same Man, and among others that of the same Body.”<sup>62</sup> She furthermore accuses Holdsworth of using “man” and “person” interchangeably: “You likewise use the terms *man* and *person* indifferently, substituting

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<sup>57</sup> Trotter Cockburn, *Letter*, 41.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid., 306–7.

<sup>61</sup> Udo Thiel, *The Early Modern Subject* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 166.

<sup>62</sup> Trotter Cockburn, *Letter*, 30.

one for the other, tho' they stand in this controversy for very different ideas."<sup>63</sup> Another passage makes clear that Trotter Cockburn is aware of the fact that Locke does not equate "man" and "person." She points out to Holdsworth that "*if [for Locke] the same man rise who was dead, it may very properly be called the resurrection of the dead. But, whatever persons are, men, according to him, are not men only by their souls: the resurrection of the same man must with him necessarily imply a body raised.*"<sup>64</sup>

There seems to be a tension in Trotter Cockburn's thought. We now have a passage from which it seems that Trotter Cockburn equates man and person, and several passages from which it becomes clear that Trotter Cockburn is aware of the distinctions that Locke made among "soul," "man," and "person." I argue that there is no such tension in Trotter Cockburn's work. She distinguishes between a technical or Lockean meaning of "person" and "person" in a more common or vulgar understanding. In the passage at note 59 in which Trotter Cockburn states that "men and persons in common use, and Scripture language, are synonymous terms," she is not advocating her own Lockean view.<sup>65</sup> What this passage does show is that Trotter Cockburn at least believes that "man" and "person" mean the same *in Scripture* and *in common use*. So, whenever Scripture mentions the word "person," one might as well read it as "man," and the other way around. What this passage is not telling us is that, for Trotter Cockburn, "man" and "person" stand for the same thing.<sup>66</sup>

Trotter Cockburn focuses on the self-conscious aspect of a person, defining a person as "self-consciousness."<sup>67</sup> She further states that "*personal identity*, according to [Locke], consist[s] in the *same consciousness*, and not in the same substance: for whatever substance there is, without *consciousness* there is no *person*. *Consciousness* therefore, and not *substance*, making a *person*, the same consciousness must make the same person, whether in the same, or in different substances."<sup>68</sup>

From this evaluation it seems that "soul," "man," and "person" are ambiguous in various contexts. In Scripture "person" and "man" stand for the same thing, as they do in

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<sup>63</sup> Trotter Cockburn, *Vindication*, 369. ("Controversy" here refers to the Locke-Stillingfleet correspondence.)

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 302.

<sup>65</sup> Trotter Cockburn, *Vindication*, 307.

<sup>66</sup> See also Emily Thomas, "Catharine Cockburn on Unthinking Immaterial Substance: Souls, Space, and Related Matters", *Philosophy Compass* 10, no. 4. (2015): 257, <https://doi.org/10.1111/phc3.12210>. Thomas argues in an endnote against Thiel that we should not read the passage quoted by Thiel as if Trotter Cockburn is advocating her own view in it. What she does is explaining that in common use "man" and "person" stand for the same thing. *Ibid.*, 271n7.

<sup>67</sup> Trotter Cockburn, Catharine. "A Defence of Mr. Locke's *Essay of Human Understanding*." In *Catharine Trotter Cockburn: Philosophical Writings*, ed. Patricia Sheridan, 35-86. (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2006), 55. [subsq: *Defence*].

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, 55-56.



common use. However, Trotter Cockburn also states that for Locke “person” is not “man,” and “person” is not “soul.” It may seem that the soul, being a conscious principle, is something person-like. But for Trotter Cockburn a soul is not quite the same as a person. I argue that for Trotter Cockburn a person is not a soul, but a person is a *mode* of the soul. A soul is the conscious principle in a man, while being a person means that you are self-conscious. If the soul is approximately equal to a person and if a person is a mode, then this would imply that the soul is a mode. Trotter Cockburn would not accept the soul being a mode because the soul is an immaterial substance.<sup>69</sup> What Trotter Cockburn would probably agree with is that being self-conscious is a mode (power) of the soul, much like thinking is. She states that she cannot reconcile her reason “to the notion, that a *power of thinking* may be the substance of spirit: actions and abilities (and I have no other idea of powers) seem unavoidably to imply some subject of them, some being, that exerts its powers in different ways of acting.”<sup>70</sup> This is similar to the claim that actions are of the individual (*actiones sunt suppositorum*), which is made explicit in the objections and replies between Hobbes and Descartes.<sup>71</sup> The thing that is self-conscious should not be identified with consciousness. Likewise, the thing that thinks is not the same as thought. A person’s ability to be self-conscious is a power that their soul has. They are not the same thing. The soul, being the subject of my act of being (self-)conscious, must be distinguished from this very act.

## 6. Conclusion

In what sense am I “the same” before and after the resurrection? Locke seems to have a simple answer: God does need to collect and reassemble all the parts; sameness of person suffices. Nevertheless, his theory of personal identity received a lot of criticism. Many of his contemporaries did not want to accept the idea that sameness of body and/or sameness of soul no longer had a role to play in the resurrection. In this paper we have seen that Locke’s contemporaries struggled with the term “person” and the identity of such a person. Most found it hard to see person as something other than a soul. For them, a soul was part of the man, which is a body–soul compound. As such, they believed that a person was just the soul-part of man. I have argued that the fact that Locke’s theory of personal identity has been difficult to understand is not only due to this new term “person” but is also to be blamed on Locke, who leaves questions unanswered and seems not to be quite sure about what to make of persons himself. It is thus not surprising that confusion resulted from Locke’s treatment of personal identity in the generation after him. Debates between Locke’s critics and defenders involved philosophical issues concerning personal immortality, bodily resurrection, the afterlife, just reward and punishment, and identity and individuation. Those holding firm to the belief in the

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<sup>69</sup> Trotter Cockburn, *Defence*, 83–85; 57–62; cf. Locke, *Essay*, 2.27.13; 25.

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid.*, 101.

<sup>71</sup> René Descartes, *Meditations, Objections, and Replies*, ed. and trans. Roger Ariew and Donald Cress (Indianapolis, IN: Hackett, 2006), 100–15.

resurrection of the same body accused Locke of heresy and of being inconsistent with Scripture.

The correspondence with Stillingfleet and the debate between Holdsworth and Trotter Cockburn shows that Locke's critics have a vulgar notion of "same body" in mind. Locke does not reject the possibility of the resurrection of vulgarly the same body. However, when he discusses the identity of a body, he understands "same body" in a philosophical sense. The living and resurrected body are the same when they have numerically the same parts. Vulgar sameness is what Locke applies to the identity conditions of an organism. An organism can gain and lose parts and changes all the time. Philosophical sameness is what Locke applies to the identity conditions of bodies. By not adhering to Locke's distinction between the vulgar and philosophical notions of sameness, Locke's contemporaries, in turn, were unable to recognize Locke's distinction between organisms and bodies. As a result, arguments missed their marks and miscommunication ran rampant. Trotter Cockburn was apt to point out that Locke differentiated between bodies and organisms. She also indicated that Locke worked with a philosophical understanding of "same body." Even for her, however, the distinctions between "man" and "person" and between "soul" and "person" were harder to understand. It turned out that personal identity was difficult to separate from the identity of body or soul.

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