Views on the Soul: Aquinas Vs. Locke

Both Thomas Aquinas and John Locke are regarded as primary influential thinkers for their era and still continue to challenge our philosophical views today. After the forerunner Augustine, Aquinas is recognized as the leading influence for Christian doctrine and revelation in the Catholic Church. He is also known as one of the dominant theorists on the soul. His philosophical work is highly renowned for the distinction between faith and philosophy and for his commentary on Aristotle. Similarly, Locke is known as the Father of Classical Liberalism and is referenced as a leading enlightenment thinker. The purpose of this dissertation aims to compare the views of the soul presented by Aquinas and Locke demonstrate that Aquinas' position more fully resolves the contemporary debate within the concerns of personal identity. I claim that Aquinas’ view of the soul better answers the specific puzzles of: persistence through time, the material makeup of a person; and the question of what it means to be a person. The paper will begin by a survey of Aquinas’ view of the soul as primarily demonstrated through his essay, On Being and Essence as this work succinctly addresses what it is to be a human being. Next, this paper will survey Locke’s position on the soul and how he has taken the discussion forward from his successor, Descartes. A brief section will follow to compare and contrast the views presented from Aquinas and Locke. The final segment will present the current concerns within personal identity and seek to show some explanations from the views exhibited by both Locke and Aquinas.

I. Aquinas’ view of the soul

In the work, On Being and Essence, Aquinas focuses on being (i.e. ontology). For the purposes of this paper, it is noteworthy to understand Aquinas’ collateral endeavour to layout an epistemology of how man perceives the world. In order to achieve this massive end, he starts with the most basic of structure of which he can conceive: beings (the existence of things). Aquinas utilizes various thought experiments to define the essence and being of a thing. He presumes that the primary way of conceiving a being is that of a substance. He claims that a substance "has an essence in the strict and true sense, while [secondarily] an

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1 Since both Aquinas and Locke were writing during an age which identified the soul as a key aspect of personal identity, this paper will primarily examine their views of the soul as a starting point to evaluate how it relates to their view of personal identity.

2 Though other resources could be used to clarify Aquinas’ views on personal identity and the soul, this paper will primarily use this resource due to the brevity and scope of its aim.
accident has it only somehow, with qualification.” Likewise within the division of substances, a simple substance is more "genuine and excellent" (i.e. God is a simple substance) but its essence is hidden from man's perception. Aquinas begins his focus on composites as these are the objects are within man's observation. It is in this discussion of being and essence that Aquinas delivers his thoughts on the soul.

For Aquinas, personal identity is not located within the body alone, as man also has a "sensitive nature and beyond that also an intellectual one". Thus, Aquinas claims that man is comprised of a heart/soul and mind. Aquinas, in Aristotelian nature, separates animals from humans by sole virtue of man's intellect. Aquinas references the nature of the soul by laying a framework which does not naturally imply the characteristic of immateriality. He initially defines the soul as “the first principle of life in living beings,” thus clarifying an inanimate object from an animate one. For Aquinas, the animate life must prove “that this principle of life, this animator, is not a material object.” Rather, the combination of motion and consciousness chiefly empowers life. Some presume that this dismisses the soul from being incorporeal as it is only the body that causes motion. However, Aquinas asserts that within animals, the body does not produce motion or consciousness. The soul answers the question, “‘What makes it alive?’ when asked either of the whole animal or of any of its vital parts.”

Aquinas claims that the soul is not a body but that which confirms the existence of a body as it takes the principle seat of life. He also argues that the soul is subsistent and able to independently exist. His theory is as follows:

The principle of the operation of the intellect, which we all the human soul, must be said to be an incorporeal and subsistent principle. For it is plain that by his intellect a human being can know the nature of all corporeal things. But to be able to know things, what knows must have nothing of their nature in its own. If it did, what it had


4 The thoughts and ideas of this section are taken from, Aquinas, Chapter 2. 229.

5 Aquinas, 232.

6 The thoughts and ideas of this section on the soul are taken from, Anthony Kenny, Aquinas on Mind, (New York, NY: Routledge, 1993), 129-143.

7 Kenny, 129. Kenny clarifies that the Latin word for soul is anima.

8 Kenny, 129.

9 Kenny, 130.
in its nature would hinder it from knowing other things, as a sick person’s tongue, infected with a bilious and bitter humour, cannot taste anything sweet because everything tastes sour to it. If, then, the intellectual principle had in itself the nature of any corporeal thing, it would not be able to know all corporeal things. But everything that is a body has some determinate nature; and so it is impossible that the intellectual principle should be a body.\(^\text{10}\)

This passage argues that the soul is not a body but rather a subsistent object.

In the first part of *Being and Essence* Aquinas clarifies that both plants and animals have souls as well as humans.\(^\text{11}\) It is difficult to discern in this section whether Aquinas affirms the characteristics of immateriality and immortality to the soul. Fortunately, in chapter four, Aquinas clarifies that he will survey “how the concept of essence applies to separated substances: namely, the soul, the intelligences, and the first cause”\(^\text{12}\) (though he presumes the audience already understands these concepts). It is here that Aquinas defines the soul as that intermediary state between death and the final judgement for humans. Since the body has died, the soul now takes on a person’s identity.

Aquinas has been regarded for trying to defend the immortality of the soul.\(^\text{13}\) Through a framework of Platonism, Aristotelianism and science, Aquinas tries to maintain the unity of the body in his aim to safeguard the soul. Aquinas “held that the human soul is a unity in which there are faculties or powers of acting. These faculties are hierarchically arranged: vegetative, sensitive, and then rational.”\(^\text{14}\) As such, Aquinas understood that the soul was given to the embryo first as a vegetative soul, then progressed to a sensitive soul and finally the rational soul. Each of these were created by God, and given chronologically as the others were obliterated. The rational soul arrives fairly late in the foetal development process of the embryo, and is not human until its arrival. Aquinas embraces Themistius’ view for potential (intellectual memory) and passive (related to body and emotions and ceases with death; also the bottom stage for rational capacity) intellects as it reconciles both Aristotle and Christian

\(^{10}\) Kenny, 132.

\(^{11}\) Kenny, *Aquinas on Being* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 25-26. The thoughts and ideas of this section are taken from this resource.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 25.

\(^{13}\) The thoughts and ideas of this section are taken from Raymond Martin and John Barresi, *Rise and Fall of Soul and Self: An Intellectual History of Personal Identity*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 79, 97-101.

\(^{14}\) Martin, 98.
Neo-Platonism from which Aquinas was most influenced. The potential intellect is united with the active intellect to produce an immortal, rational soul. However, according to this assumption, Aquinas must wrestle with whether there is only one or many active intellects. It is also important to identify the famous medieval philosopher, Averroisis, as well as note Aquinas’ attempt to separate his philosophy of the individual soul from the views represented by this radical follower of Aristotle. Averroisis is known for his unicity thesis (also called monopsychism) wherein all human beings share the same intellect (which does not concern the soul). Averroisis’ aim is both ontological and epistemological in that, “On the one hand, [Averroisis] wants to explain how universal intelligibles can be known, on the other hand, he wants to account for Aristotle’s claim that the intellect is pure potentiality and unmixed with the body.” This is particularly worrisome for Aquinas in that humans would not be capable of an individual status in immortality. However, Aquinas asserts that claiming a unique active intellect for all mankind is a misinterpretation of Aristotle. Aquinas believes that the main aspect of personhood is the rational capacities located within the soul and thus the unicity thesis would not be able to effectively explain how the soul is an individual thinking person. In Averroisis’ defence he says, “the intelligible form is joined to the individual human being through the actualized imaginative form, which is particular.” Thus demonstrating that a person is still unique rather than wholly universal. It is within this context that Aquinas refutes Averroisis’ work and seeks to create a defence for the immortality of the individual soul from the proceedings of Aristotle. He says, “…the words of Averroes, who announced that there is a universal and unique mind for all men. We have already argued against this doctrine elsewhere, but our purpose is to write again and at length in refutation because of the continued imprudence of those who gainsay the truth on this head.” Aquinas affirms that the soul is an individual form and the body is the material

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18 Hasse.

19 Thomas Gilby, St. Thomas Aquinas: Philosophical Texts (London: Oxford University Press, 1951), 206. This quote is taken from Opusc. VI, de Unitate Intellectus contra Averroistats Parisienses.
conduit where the soul is housed. The soul, though not a complete form, is able reside on its own as it also contains the intellect.

It is worth examining the unique view of the relation of body and soul with respect to dualism and physicalism as substantiated by Aquinas. Though it might appear that Aquinas takes a Cartesian substance dualist view (wherein the body is a substance and the soul is a separate substance while interacting together) yet it is this idea which fails to communicate the Aristotelian nature which Aquinas asserts of the body and soul. The soul is able to exist after the death of the body as it the soul that contains the rational form. However, Aquinas claims that this stage of the soul is merely a subsistent. To better understand this term, McInerny, and O'Callaghan have defined subsistent as “[…] something capable of existing on its own, not in another. But that capacity to exist own its own is not distinctive of a substance.” Similarly, a table is a subsistent object as it is able to exist on its own. A table is not a substance, according to Aquinas as it cannot exist in another. “A substance, on the other hand, is something that is both subsistent and complete in a nature—a nature being an intrinsic principle of movement and change in the subject.” Consider the example of a detached foot in which Aquinas would correspondingly claim that since the foot is unable to work apart from its connection to the living body, it is merely a subsistent object. A foot cannot be a substance as it is incomplete in its nature (thus it is not respectively identified anymore as a human foot as it is only comparatively human). A soul, unlike a human body part, is a substance as it is the formal part of what it is to be a person. However, without the body, this substance is incomplete. “Consequently, it is not a substance in its own right, even if it is capable of subsisting apart from the living body. It is because it is naturally incomplete as subsisting apart from the body that Aquinas sees this state as unnatural for it, and an intimation of, but not an argument for, the resurrection of the body.” Aquinas further

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20 With the exception of the period between bodily death and the final judgment where the body has yet to be resurrected.


22 McInerny, and O'Callaghan.

23 Ibid.

24 To see Aquinas discuss this argument in detail, see Summa Theologica questions 75-102; questions 75-76 specifically address the mind-body problem.

25 McInerny, and O'Callaghan.
clarifies in his third objection to the question ‘whether the soul is something subsistent?’ in the *Summa Theologicae*. It states,

Further, if the soul were subsistent, it would have some operation apart from the body. But it has no operation apart from the body, not even that of understanding: for the act of understanding does not take place without a phantasm, which cannot exist apart from the body. Therefore the human soul is not something subsistent. [He replies:] The body is necessary for the action of the intellect, not as its origin of action, but on the part of the object; for the phantasm is to the intellect what color is to the sight. Neither does such a dependence on the body prove the intellect to be non-subsistent; otherwise it would follow that an animal is non-subsistent, since it requires external objects of the senses in order to perform its act of perception.\(^{26}\)

Aquinas’ response indicates his understanding of self-knowledge.\(^{27}\) That is, Aquinas affirms that the soul needs a body in order to perceive knowledge (that is, knowledge which is gathered through the eyes and further received in the brain). Thus, Aquinas’ view is especially unique from his previous successors in that the soul is not separate from the body. He also argues for the soul’s immortality (rather than its death with the body) and emphasizing it’s rational form.

Aquinas additionally affirmed that during the death of the physical body (and the vegetative and sensitive parts), the soul acquires the intellect and the will. Raymond Martin further comments on the previous thoughts concerning the soul. He says, “Augustine and other Neoplatonists thought, the soul using the body, but the human being as a whole; soul and body each play a part in producing sensations, which belong to both in union rather than to either separately.”\(^{28}\) Aquinas maintained that unlike other immaterial beings, (i.e. God or Angels) who could exist independently of matter, humans required a material body in order to perform various activities or utilize a pure intellect. He also interestingly claimed that particular forms could be known as substances by joining with existence rather than matter. As such Aquinas’ aim was to try to uphold a view of single substance. The advantage of this view enables him to both affirm Aristotle’s position and still hold to personal immortality. Aquinas allows the individuation of each human soul by claiming that it was God’s creation and intention for each soul to be in a particular body. Here again, Aquinas “held that a human being is a whole person or self only when a human body—either


\(^{28}\) Martin, 99.
naturally generated or resurrected—is informed by a rational soul, he took the view that the soul separated from body after death is a continuation not of the self, but only of a part of the self.” The stage in which the human body was disconnected from the soul was essentially incomplete as Aquinas clarified that the intellect and will would also cease in their capacities at bodily death. He claimed that during this time frame, the rational soul only has partial knowledge of its previous actions within its life and can gain knowledge of God, other intelligences, and of universals truths. Thus, at the resurrection of the body, the soul will retain the information from its previous life as well as the intermediary stage without a human body. It should also be noted that Aquinas comes as close as a Christian thinker can come to denying the soul the status of complete substance. He claims that the soul is a form, not a complete substance, and asserts that the soul can be on its own because of the intellect. Thus enabling Aquinas to partake in a very unique view of the soul when compared with the position set forth by Locke.

II. Locke’s view on the soul

It is important to understand the Cartesian influence that previously set the stage for Locke’s work on the status of the soul. The location of the soul, according to Descartes, was housed in the brain. His position on the soul was two-fold. Philosopher Catherine Wilson claims, “Descartes therefore offered one important way in which accounts of the soul derived from the *De Anima* were transmitted under the impact of the mechanical philosophy into more strictly physiological studies on the one hand, and towards more abstract questions of knowledge and of metaphysics on the other.” Descartes was not restricted by a mechanistic understanding of matter but addressed broader issues including morality and personhood. From this Cartesian framework Locke proceeds forward in a discussion on his unique perspective of the soul.

Locke’s aim in *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* is to assess the perimeter of man’s knowledge. His work launches pioneering theories for eighteenth century philosophy of mind. These concepts comprise both applying the methods of Baconian

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29 Martin, 100.

30 This section regarding Locke’s view of the soul is repurposed from the author’s previous unpublished paper entitled, “Locke on the Soul”.

experimental philosophy to the topic of understanding as well as investigating the mind outside of the traditional use of natural and logical philosophy. He notably claims that personal identity is not limited to the definition that the existence of a single substance is essentially ‘me’. Rather Locke declares the distinction is between man (comprised of a body and soul) and person (consciousness; that which identifies an individual). Locke uses a succession of thought experiments to show that the various present-day beliefs for the definition of mankind are both insufficient and ambiguous for articulating a way to identify man. For example, he hypothesises that if the soul is that which defines a man, an individual will cease to change in the transition from birth to death since he obtains the same soul throughout the process. According to Locke, man is essentially an animal. The key difference between animals and persons resides with the ability humans possess for rationality and logic. Since man and animal are so similar, Locke more carefully distinguishes his terms by formulating a separate definition for both man and person. His definition of personhood states, “[a person] is an intelligent thinking being that can know itself as itself the same thinking thing in different times and places.” Locke’s research enables him to both confidently address the current Cartesian status of the immaterial soul while proposing new theories to better address moral accountability and responsibility while additionally reconciling human beings with scientific materialism.

Seventeenth century philosophers also wrestled with the soul’s materiality. Locke claimed matter involved small particles, also known as the Corpuscularian theory of matter. Hylarie Kochiras describes the Corpuscularian view by saying, “the [orthodox view of the] corpuscular hypothesis restricts those inherent properties to size, shape, number, and motion, and holds that all other qualities and operations are explicable in terms of that restricted set of properties. The orthodox version thus implies a proviso of strict mechanism—that bodies causally interact only locally, by impact, such that action at a distance is denied.”

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32 The thoughts and ideas of this section are taken from Ibid., 133.


was an atomist in that he thought material particles could not be further divided.\textsuperscript{35} He also used this theory to assert that the soul is able to move and that the soul was not specifically material. He clarifies that there is an incorporeal soul within humanity which enables persons to experience, think and remember. God superadds man’s thoughts and memories, according to Locke, within the brain of human bodies.

Descartes confident understanding of the soul contrasts with Locke’s claim that the soul contains a lack of knowledge. Locke is sceptical of the soul’s composition but confirms its existence. He also disagrees with the traditional naturalistic position (i.e. transitory animal spirits) for the soul’s identification but proposes that the soul can drift from within more than one animal or human body (or both). He claims that a soul can reside in one human body but during the unconscious states such as sleep or death, the soul can change to a different human or animal body. Consider the following example, James is sleeping, since he is unconscious, Locke suggests that James’ soul can drift into a completely different body than the one he was currently using. Thus, when James arises, he might possess a completely different soul than the one he obtained prior to sleeping. Since the soul can drift indefinitely, it is inevitable that it cannot feature the characteristic of personhood. The soul is categorized as material thinking matter according to Locke. He says, “...‘tis but defining the soul to be a substance, that always thinks, and the business is done.”\textsuperscript{36} Locke gives the soul a new classification from the soul’s former immaterial nature. This challenges the current Cartesian status of the soul by questioning whether the soul’s immaterial status has the ability to think and recall memories in a location other than the body. Locke asks why God has ordained that the immaterial soul is limited to the original body of obtaining memories and further observes why the body is significant for the final judgment. \textsuperscript{37} Locke’s questions stem from his aim to preserve a system wherein he can still account for the last judgement but disregarding the immaterial soul as asserted from Descartes. Locke specifically addresses whether a person can recall his earthly actions deeming merit and punishment if his soul can drift into another body during unconsciousness. The subsequent section will address Locke’s response to this question of moral justice.

\textsuperscript{35} Uzgalis.

\textsuperscript{36} Locke, 116.

\textsuperscript{37} Serjeantson, 134.
In Locke’s assessment, moral responsibility and accountability are evaluated from the memories and experiences which God places in a person’s consciousness during the Final Judgement. Presuming a person can forget some of the actions which merit punishment and reward, this theory advantageously enables God clear the worries on injustice by bringing this memory to mind at the time of accountability. For example, if Walter commits a murder, traditionally Walter’s soul would be the reference point for accounting for this offense. Locke instead suggests that at the point of final accountability, God will place in Walter’s consciousness the memory of his murderous act so that he will be fairly accounted for his offense. Locke’s reason for this method of accountability is to ensure that one is justly held accountable, as otherwise Locke would be consider it one of the most wretched experiences to receive punishment for an act one did not commit. This contributes to his theory in which morality is not linked with a human body. Locke stresses the conscious’ ability to recall memories indispensable for personal identity. He challenges the previous Cartesian status of the soul by claiming, “But taking, as we ordinarily do [...] the Soul of a man, for immaterial substance, independent from Matter, and indifferent alike to it all, there can from the Nature of things, be no Absurdity at all, to suppose, that the same Soul may, at different times be united to different Bodies, and with them make up for that time one Man.”

He further states, “a part of a Sheep’s body yesterday should be part of a Man’s Body to-morrow, and in that union make a vital part of Meliboeus himself, as well as it did of his Ram.” As demonstrated in this passage, Locke controversially dissimulates the personal identity connected with the immaterial soul. He instead uses consciousness as the key factor for defining personal identity. This bold definition opposes Descartes’s view of a duality of body and immaterial soul for personal identity. Locke does not emphasize the human body’s influence in morality and dismisses the body’s connection with personal identity at the final judgment. He likewise advises that the final accountability will solely assess thoughts and actions. Locke claims his position is the best method to fairly measure one’s actions deeming punishment and reward (that is, a system which enables a person to remember each moral action committed).

Locke’s position on the soul foundationally omits the characteristics of immateriality and personal identity. Locke does not deny the soul’s immateriality; however he does not see

38 Locke, 27. The thoughts is this section are taken from Stewart Goez, A Brief History of the Soul, (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 133.
39 Serjeantson, 134. The thoughts and ideas of this section are taken from this source.
it as a necessary aspect. By eliminating the soul’s aforementioned connection with personal identity and morality, Locke is able to replace the soul with consciousness. His journal entry demonstrates his dissatisfaction with the previous status of the soul. He says, “The usuall physicall proofe (as I may soe call it) of the immortality of the soul is this, Matter cannot thinke ergo the soule is immateriall, noe thing can naturally destroy an immaterial thing ergo the soul is naturally immortall.” Locke also claimed this “proved ‘noe other immortality of the soule then what belongs to one of Epicurus’s atoms, viz. That it perpetually exists but has noe sense either of happynesse or misery.” He suggests that rational thought can be located in moving matter. Locke’s aim is to improve Descartes’ status on the soul by suggesting the soul obtains a material nature. Locke’s new status of the soul advances Descartes’ position by enabling a material soul to exist in the afterlife. In Descartes’ view, immateriality was a necessary requirement of the soul for immortality. Locke claims that theorizing the soul in this new way will provide for moral justice in the final judgement.

Locke’s theory of the soul also advantageously allows him to avoid the previous criticism of accounting for the soul’s location after bodily death but prior to the Last Judgement. The Cartesian soul claims that material substances cease to exist with bodily death (requiring an immaterial substance for participation in the Last Judgment and unavoidably providing an inadequate location for the soul after bodily death) as well as advocating that the immaterial nature of the soul authorizes a continual and indestructible existence. A material soul, according to Locke, would cease to exist at the death of the body, but return at the Last Judgment. Robert Herbert in his article entitled, “One Short Sleep Past?” likens this re-emergence to the intermission in a theatrical play. The actors leave concluding the first act (similar to bodily death), participate in a brief rest (bodily death), then return for the second act (final judgement). As God has not fully disclosed the soul’s status, Locke claims that his view concerning a material thinking soul perfectly complies with God’s ethical and biblical instructions. As previously stated, Locke shows that a material soul has

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40 Ibid.
41 Ibid.
42 Ibid.
43 Ibid., 133-134.
the ability to rationally discern the memories necessary for moral justice.

Locke assumes that an immaterial substance view of the soul is not able to attest to the standards of personal identity. Philosopher William Uzgalis further clarifies this by saying, “Locke is sceptical about our ability to reidentify the same soul over time. He claims that if we were always awake, we could be certain that we had the same soul. But consciousness has natural gaps in it, such as periods during which we are asleep. Locke claims that there is no way of knowing that one soul has not been substituted for another during this period of absence of consciousness.”

Cartesians affirmed the need for a strong connection between immateriality and immortality. Locke contrasts this view by advocating that a material soul can still sufficiently offer eternal security (though the soul is not apart of personal identity). For Locke, eternal security comes from knowing that a person is defined solely with consciousness. Different souls (or animals) can house the same consciousness (that which defines personhood) as it is may be dispersed from one soul to another. His theory also avoids the moral inequality of a multiple person soul. Instead Locke demonstrates that ethical obligation is given to the consciousness which belongs to only one person. Locke asserts that primary purpose of the soul is to modify itself to enable the indwelling of consciousness. This unique theory of personhood places a strong emphasis on the mind and disregards the soul’s traditional usefulness.

Locke’s soul has little purpose, specifically in regards to spiritual prominence.

Catherine Wilson confirms:

The key elements of this programme [Essay Concerning Human Understanding] were: (a) an emphasis on the role of the ideas of an afterlife and an omniscient judge in strengthening moral resolve and enhancing moral conduct; (b) the elaboration of a phenomenological theory of personal identity that did not required a substantial and incorporeal soul to serve as a target of divine reward and punishment. Even if we are hedonistic machines, Locke thought, we are machines with the ability to act for our long-term happiness, once we acquire the relevant ideas.

Locke claimed that his system provided an upgrade from the former Cartesian soul in that his just system helped man achieve his long-term desires. Locke must however address the criticisms regarding the worry a person may face for not being able to inhabit the same soul.

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45 Uzgalis,
during unconscious states. Locke responds that it is impossible to reside with the same soul. He states, “I do not say there is no Soul in a Man, because he is not sensible of it in his sleep; But I do say, he cannot think at any time waking or sleeping, without being sensible of it. Our being sensible of it is not necessary to anything but our thoughts, and to them it is and to them it always will be necessary, till we can think without being conscious of it.”

Locke defends himself by claiming: if a man is indefinitely awake he could be certain that he will remain with the same soul, but since he sleeps, he cannot guarantee that when he arises that the same soul will be with him. This innovative system of personhood radically differs from religious beliefs of the soul previously embraced by Cartesians. Locke does not use the soul for religious purposes and virtually marks the soul as obsolete (though avoids that bold of a claim). Locke divides the connection of soul and consciousness and uses man’s memories for accountability in the final judgment.

III. Comparison/Contrast of Aquinas’ and Locke’s view of the soul

Aquinas preceded Locke beginning his work as a medieval philosopher in the 13th century. He was primarily influenced by the works of Aristotle and expanding his discourse essentially to the fields of theology and philosophy. Locke, a British philosopher, took a less religious slant than Aquinas completing the majority of his writing in the 17th century and covering his research in numerous fields, famously including the subjects of government and empiricism. Both Aquinas and Locke wrested with questions of personhood and identity and are regarded as leading sources for the founding theories on the definition of a person. Locke and Aquinas both affirm that consciousness is a key source for personal identity. Aquinas differs from Locke in that he claims that the whole person consists of the unity of the body, soul, and intellect whereas Locke asserts that it is consciousness alone which accounts for personhood. Locke also believes that one’s consciousness can interchange with different bodies and souls during unconscious states. Aquinas does not affirm that one can have a different soul or body other than the original body and soul he was first given from God (as the resurrected body is still a form of his original earthly body).

It is important to note that Aquinas is trying to Christianize previous Aristotelian philosophy as well as refute Averroisis’ use of universalizing the soul. His efforts to promote the immortality of the soul as well as his defence of the relation of the body and soul as one unified person are primarily a reflection of his Christian beliefs and commitment to

47 Locke, 109.
church doctrine. As such, the immortality of the soul is important for Aquinas as it reveals his loyalty to uphold biblical teachings on the final judgment and afterlife. Locke’s theory is not compatible with a religious view despite his aim to rescue moral accountability, the Last Judgement & bodily Resurrection. Locke’s aim was to search of the perimeter of man’s knowledge and to utilize Francis Bacon for influencing his theories. Locke tries to maintain a system which conforms to a socially accepted idea of morality and afterlife. However, his philosophy on the soul and personhood would be more easily understood if he did not try to adhere to Christianity altogether. As this essay will later demonstrate, Locke’s view of the soul and of personhood is troublesome in the ways it tries to appease religious dogma.

Both Locke and Aquinas affirm that man begins with a blank slate. In order to gain knowledge, one must reflect and respond to sensory experiences. Though an animal can also gain knowledge from sensory experiences, humans distinguish themselves by relationally interacting with other humans to gain universal ideas and necessary truths. Unlike Locke, Aquinas slightly differs in that he believes that man obtains an incomplete amount of knowledge without a body. Namely, Aquinas asserts that man obtains self-knowledge through perception and the use of the body to do so (i.e. eyes, and other senses). Locke does not require a body for the acquisition and reception of knowledge.

Aquinas’ view of morality is renowned for his natural law perspective in that he affirms that the law of God is written on man’s hearts. In this position, a person understands right and wrong from a sense of guilt or conviction within one’s inner soul and will. He further clarifies by saying, “By common agreement human wills can establish a right in those matters where there is no conflict with natural justice. Wherefore, Aristotle remarks that in their principle legal rights may be such or otherwise, but once they are laid down it is different. What is contrary to natural right cannot be made just by human will. Woe to those who make iniquitous laws.” Aquinas claims God is the provider of morality contributing to a higher law of divine providence. Man, on the other hand, is the receiver of God’s moral terms and rationally discerns how to act in a sensible fashion from these instructions. Locke

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48 Kenny, Aquinas On Being, 26. The thoughts and ideas presented within this section are taken from this resource.


50 Gilby, 342. The quote is taken from Summa Theologica 2a-2ae, Iiiv. 2, ad 2.
also adheres to a natural law for guiding a person’s moral obligations but in a different regard than that of Aquinas. He affirms that the law is created by a superior authority (though he does not necessarily imply that this source be God). He states,

[w]ithout showing a law that commands or forbids [people], moral goodness will be but an empty sound, and those actions which the schools here call virtues or vices may by the same authority be called by contrary names in another country; and if there be nothing more than their decisions and determinations in the case, they will be still nevertheless indifferent as to any man's practice, which will by such kind of determinations be under no obligation to observe them.\(^{51}\)

Locke demonstrates man’s responsibility to this obligatory set of rules and reveals the teleological nature to a person’s existence. He also claims that morality is the one area of rationality (apart from mathematics) which can be held to a level of certainty.\(^{52}\) He asserts that though the human mind may be frail at trying to understand and reason with the revelation of the natural world; still a person’s consciousness is perfectly fit for comprehending morality and ethical duty. Both Aquinas and Locke affirm that a person’s rational faculties are a key source for discerning right from wrong for moral decision-making.

IV. Description of Current Personal Identity Concerns

Theories of the soul and personal identity were not limited to the thoughts of Aquinas and Locke. Though these philosophers presented helpful ideas to address their present concerns on personhood and it is still a current debate among philosophers today. This section will survey three contemporary puzzles of personal identity in order to question how Aquinas and Locke might address these problems through their views. These puzzles are as follows: how one is to persist through time; the material makeup of a person; and the question of what it means to be a person.

IV.i. Puzzle 1: Persistence through Time


\(^{52}\) The thoughts and ideas of this paragraph are taken from Sheridan.
One popular puzzle among personal identity concerns the question of how things persist through time. One might question whether a thing is “wholly present at every moment during which it exists, as the friends of endurance think? Or is it a four-dimensional space-time worm that has different parts at different times, as the friends of perdurance think? Or is it instead a momentary object related in various to-be-spelled-out ways to other momentary objects existing at other times?” The three general views of persistence most commonly referenced when discussing these sorts of questions are labelled as: endurance (three-dimensionalism), exdurance (sequentialism), and perdurance (four-dimensionalism). Sally Haslanger has written a helpful article called Persistence through Time, in which clarifies a more technical definition to these three views of persistence. She says, “Perdurance theory. Objects persist only by perduring. There are perduring, but no enduring or exdurable particulars. Exdurance theory (aka stage theory). Ordinary objects persist by exduring. There are (weird) perduring particulars, and no enduring particulars. Endurance theory. Ordinary objects persist by enduring. There are enduring particulars, and there may or may not be perduring or exdurable particulars as well.” Each of these positions attempt to answer the question of how objects persist through time. Perdurantists claim that that by virtue of being partly present through parts or stages at different times objects are able to persist through time. Exdurantists answer the persistence question by addressing how these stages are related and claim that objects are stages. Endurantists try to resolve this puzzle by showing that an object can persist through time if it is wholly present at distinctive times. It is important to note that all these theories are an incomplete attempt to resolve the persistence question as new criticisms and refutations are presently taking place in this contemporary debate. However, each view represents an adequate response from utilizing both the criticisms from the current debate as well as consistently updating the research on personal

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53 The thoughts and ideas of this section are taken from the author’s previously written unpublished paper entitled, “The Counting Problem”.


57 The thoughts and ideas presented from these views of persistence are taken primarily from Loux and Zimmerman, 317-319.
identity in attempts to answer this puzzle.\textsuperscript{58}

In order to understand how this puzzle of persistence relates to this investigation on Aquinas and Locke, one must also consider the relevance of how to account for the persistence of the soul and the persistence of the immortality of the soul. Roderick M. Chisholm’s essay entitled, \textit{Identity through Time}, clarifies the individual relevance for understanding the need to discuss these puzzles. He states,

Each of us knows with respect to himself that he now has properties he didn’t have in the past and that formerly he had properties he doesn’t have now. (‘But a thing $x$ isn’t identical with a thing $y$ unless they have all their properties in common. And if the present you has one set of properties and the past you another, how can they be the same thing?’) The answer is, of course, that there aren’t two you’s, a present one having one set of properties and a past one having another. It is rather that you \textit{are} now such that you had these properties and lack those, whereas formerly you \textit{were} such that you had those properties and lacked these.\textsuperscript{59}

Chisholm uses this analogy to demonstrate the importance of articulating how a person can exist in the past and also exist in the present without being identified as two separate persons. Similarly, this puzzle enables the reader to grasp the significance of how to properly convey the soul existing in a person’s body at the beginning of his life and how the soul which occupies his body at the end of his bodily life is not recognized as a different soul. Additionally, one must be able to express how the soul that continues to persist through time without a body (bodily death) and then reunited with his body (bodily resurrection) is not acknowledged as a separate soul, but is rather the same soul persisting through time. Does the soul have a temporal part as a body? Or is a person’s body an object to be identified with different stages (infant, teenager, adult, etc)? If one chooses to identify objects as stages\textsuperscript{60}, then he must also examine how to count each stage. For example: an unripe avocado and a ripe avocado are considered the same object as the avocado passes through time. However these two different stages of the object do not share the same identity relation. Thus the numerical identity of these objects, when counting diachronically, produces massive numbers. Or on a different persistence view, should the soul be identified as wholly present at each moment in time? As such, ordinary objects are just sequences of objects, and nothing


\textsuperscript{60} Stage Theory is a form of perdurantism represented by Katherine Hawley and Ted Sider. More information can be seen through these resources: Katherine Hawley, \textit{How Things Persist} & Theodore Sider, “All the World’s a Stage,” Australasian Journal of Philosophy Vol. 74, 1996: 433-453.
can exist in different times. Since everything only lasts for one instance, it is concerning to understand how to defend the immortality of the soul. Seemingly the soul would cease to exist after each point of it being wholly present. As demonstrated, the metaphysics of change have a significant role within resolving a reliable view of the soul.

Since both Locke and Aquinas have not straightforwardly answered the question to this modern puzzle, all the following speculative ideas are based off of their previously stated views on the soul, mind, and personhood. It should also be noted that Aquinas and Locke were not unaware of this field of the difficulty with personhood as they both repeatedly addressed what it meant to be a person in their writing. There are many resources that demonstrate the hot topic which personhood became in the emphasis and discussion of multiple philosophers within medieval philosophy. The subsequent sections will look at both Aquinas’ and Locke’s original works as well as investigate secondary literature to develop a response for how to account for a dependable view of the soul amidst the worries of these contemporary puzzles of personhood and persistence.

It is important to note that when looking at personal identity puzzles, typically neo-Lockeans do not give precise classifications of personhood.61 “Rather they supply contextual definitions for the form ‘For any x and y, x is the same person as y if and only if x bears psychological relation R to y’.”62 As such, neo-Lockeans do not give a definition for persons, but rather follow the contextual definition similarly presented.63 In order to assess a persistence view for Locke’s theories, the following section will briefly evaluate how Locke identifies persons. Locke’s work in his Essay from the chapter entitled “Of Identity and Diversity” summarises this point by saying,

Another occasion the mind often takes of comparing, is the very being of things, when, considering anything as existing at any determined time and place, we compare it with itself existing at another time, and thereon form the ideas of identity and diversity. When we see anything to be in any place in any instant of time, we are sure (be it what it will) that it is that very thing, and not another which at that same time exists in another place, how like and undistinguishable soever it may be in all other respects: and in this consists identity, when the ideas it is attributed to vary not at all

61 The thoughts and ideas of this section are primarily taken from Jason Stanley, The Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 48, No. 191 (Apr., 1998), pp. 159-175.
62 Stanley, 159.
63 Stanley also notes, “The neo-Lockean thesis is inconsistent with the claim that persons are their bodies, unless with David Lewis, 'Survival and Identity', in A. Rorty (ed.), The Identities of Persons (Univ. of California Press, 1976), pp. 17-40, we re-interpret body-talk in terms of the language of temporal parts: see J.J. Thomson, 'People and Their Bodies', in J. Dancy (ed.), Parfit and his Critics (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997), pp. 203-29, for discussion. I take Lewis' view, however, to be a formal variant of a contingent identity view.” 159.
Locke’s view of identity can be classified within the perdurantist or four-dimensionalism view as this quote demonstrates his inclination towards identifying objects (“when we see anything) by their different properties (“to be in any place or time”) or temporal parts (“not at all from what they were that moment”). As previously suggested, Locke’s view of personal identity centres on one’s consciousness. Since this view enables an interchange of body and soul this naturally entails a four-dimensional perspective of identity in that its temporal parts (body, soul) identify a person. Each of these instances of temporal parts combine together to form a space-time worm which comprises the whole of a person. For example, according to Locke, John is born and becomes a person when he is given his conscious, since he has an infant’s body at this period of time, we recognize John at the beginning of his whole space time worm at “Time A”. Five years later John is running around school and has developed in his rational faculties. John is no longer at “Time A” but is now at “Time F” as “Time A” and Time F are not the same person, but share the same identity relation as the same consciousness was inhabited in John in both “Time A” and “Time F”. Locke implies that a person can exist through time through his various parts (interchanging bodies in unconscious states) at different times. For example, a person is recognized with one body, but during a state of sleep, the person may awake with a different part, a soul, which he did not have when he slept. He is still the same person traveling through time, but he has different parts present at different times (i.e. a person possesses one body at time ‘x’ when he goes to sleep and when he awakes at time ‘y’ he arises with a different body but each time is connected to the space time worm which comprises this person’s life). According to Locke, a person retains physiological continuity through retaining the same consciousness throughout the process of time. Though one’s body may die, and his soul may drift from one body to another, he can verify his existence and personal identity through his consciousness.

There are various concerns which the neo-Lockean must address when associating Locke’s views of personhood with four dimensionalism to answer the persistence questions. One challenge involves responding to the difficulty of thinking of people with their temporal parts when it seems more intuitive to reference the person as a whole being (not just his

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properties at a given time). David Wiggins, a three dimensionalist, argues this point by saying, “To act and think as it does, a conscious being must think of its whole self as present at the moment of reflection, perception or action and poised to persist in that way in the future. It must think of itself at t as extending in space wherever its parts are at t. It must conceive its past as consisting not of its parts (in the sense in which it is spatially extended by its parts at t) but of the earlier phases or stages of the life of the whole being which it itself is.”

Locke’s view of personhood does not include any properties to make up a person other than his consciousness. As Wiggins suggests, it is problematic to reference a person without referring to all it is that makes a person who he represents at that given time (body, soul, mind). Wiggins claims that it is also anti-scientistic in that it does not account for the biological, natural, and essential methods of description which make up the field of science. Neo-Lockeans must also address the problems involved with counting when using this way of identifying objects and persons. Katherine Hawley gives an example of counting a sweater on a peg. She questions how to count the amount of sweaters on a peg at a given point in time during the day. The four dimensionalist theory implies that there could be an infinite amount of sweaters on the peg by noon since the counting is completed by temporal parts (even though the temporal sweater parts are identity related). Endurantists also have to address this question of counting by identity, but their view seems to have a better handle on this puzzle as they do not need to count each temporal part of the sweater in a space time worm but rather the instance of a wholly present sweater (which is non-existent as soon as the instance is over).

Unlike Locke, Aquinas follows a view more similar to the Endurantist position. Aquinas is considered a three dimensionalist as he closely follows Aristotle and Aristotelians are known as representing three dimensionalism. Thus, Aquinas affirms that a person is wholly present at each point that he/she exists. Wiggins, a famous neo-Aristotelian, further clarifies how Aristotle and Aquinas identify objects and persons. He says,

Here I offer a small supplement to Aristotle. What guides our efforts to make sense of the world, to track things, and to reconstruct that which befalls them outside

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67 Hawley, 161. The thoughts and ideas of this example are taken from this source.

68 There are many other concerns with four dimensionalism, but due to the brevity of this paper, only a few will be provided. To read more about the problems with four dimensionalism, see Sider, *Four Dimensionalism*. 
our view, is a rough and ready but developing conception of what a man, an apple tree, a horse . . . is. Leibniz would say it is a clear indistinct idea, an applicable and practically effective conception of such a thing, but a conception ready and waiting to be supplanted by what Leibniz would call a more distinct idea of it—an idea or conception that is better informed and more analytical or articulated. As we enquire into the nature of what confronts us, we subsume it provisionally and tentatively under more and more specific conceptions of the phusis which it instantiates, simultaneously inquiring into that phusis and correcting or refining our ideas about the phuseis of a host of other kinds that we encounter. (Compare Aristotle, Posterior Analytics, II, 19.) It is a natural suggestion that our aptitude for this kind of work is all of a piece with our practical capacity to apprehend the meanings of the substantives for thing-kinds which we learn not from verbal definitions but from examples that we encounter or that are shown to us.\(^{69}\)

By this quote, Wiggins demonstrates that one should examine the methods for how an object persists through time by undertaking to study exactly what the object is defined as (drawn from the thinker Aristotle and subsequently, Aquinas). Further, an object is better understood by recognizing it as a whole object than classifying it by verbal definitions. For example, Wiggins implies that it is better to recognize a person, Tom, by wholeness of that which makes him Tom rather than identifying Tom by his stages of infancy, adolescence and adulthood stages. Wiggins additionally challenges the perdurantist view by saying, “Are thing-moments such as this-horse-at-t to be introduced or explained not in a way that presupposes horses and times but directly and simply by definition—creative definition—or by simple postulation?\(^{70}\) Aquinas affirms this point by expressing that persons should be identified by the whole of what it is that comprises itself. He recognizes that a soul is incomplete and cannot function properly without its attachment to the body. This entails that Aquinas supports that persons persist through time by representing himself as wholly present at each moment. Three dimensionalists do not affirm that persons have temporal parts or identify persons with time slots that are apart of a space time worm. Endurantists do not use these terms (temporal parts, time slots, space time worms) when describing how persons and objects persist through time. Instead endurantists affirm that at each moment when trying to identify a person, he is looking at an individual instance of the whole presence of a person. As soon as that instance is identified, it ceases to exist.

The three dimensional view displayed in Aquinas’ theories on identity leads him to face difficult concerns in his attempts to defend the immortality of the soul. Aquinas’ view of the soul claims that once the soul comes into existence it does not cease to exist with bodily

\(^{69}\) Wiggins, 8. The thoughts and ideas of this section are taken from this source.

\(^{70}\) Wiggins, 12.
death but continues living in the afterlife (further completing oneself with the resurrected body). The three dimensionalist perspective demonstrates that each time a person is wholly present, he then ceases to exist as a new instance of a person appears to replace the one prior. There is no wholly present instance that exists in different times, rather each object/person only lasts for one instance. This view seems to jeopardise Aquinas’ attempts to keep the soul immortal and thus he must account for how a person (e.g. and his soul) will persist through time while also sustaining the immortal nature of the soul’s key characteristic. As such, one can see that the metaphysics of change are particularly important for determining the persistence of persons but also for discerning the persistence of souls. The following section will examine another aspect of metaphysics that is helpful for understanding significance of defining personhood.

IV.ii. Puzzle 2: ‘What Am I?’

In responding to issues of personal identity, it is also helpful to try to answer common questions associated with this field. The next puzzle this paper will feature involves responding to the question, ‘What am I?’.

This dilemma of personhood addresses the basic makeup of a human being. A person must discern whether his composition is solely matter or composed of partial matter or fully created of another substance. Also, one must speak to the limitations of matter (i.e. whether matter is the exact size of a human body or whether it be bigger or smaller). Other questions on this topic include: “Where in other words, do our spatial boundaries lie? More fundamentally, what fixes those boundaries? Are we substances—metaphysically independent beings—or is each of us a state or an aspect of something else, or perhaps some sort of process or event? […] What is our basic metaphysical nature?” There are a few possible explanations to this query.

One philosopher, Swinburne, proposes that the humans are composed of a material body and an immaterial soul, thus mankind is partially material. A differing view supported by Shoemaker and Baker suggest that humans are the same as animals in their makeup, their distinction is revealed in the way that man persists through time. Lewis and Hudson propose

71 The thoughts and ideas of this section are taken primarily from this resource, Olson, “Personal Identity”.

72 Olson.


that humans are a temporal part of an animal.\textsuperscript{75} One other final position claimed by Russell, Wittgenstein and Unger assert that man is nothing, and he does not exist.\textsuperscript{76}

Aquinas seemingly sides with the first opinion as he claims humans are made up of a material body which houses one’s intellect, will, and immaterial soul. As previously discussed, Aquinas claims that a person is not complete or wholly human without the addition of his body (i.e. the intermediary stage between bodily death and the final judgement). There does not seem to be a point where Aquinas claims a person would ever exist without his soul and as such, partial immateriality is that which defines humanity. Locke however seems to have a conflation of several views in which he claims that consciousness is central to a person’s makeup. Locke would also affirm that it is natural for man to have a body and a soul. He does not see the intermediary stage between bodily death and the final judgement as a problem for a human’s makeup as the body is not central to his view of personhood.

Naturally there are several concerns with the way that Locke has answered this question. First, how does one account for the moral faults wherein the body was the acting source for moral error (rather than consciousness)? For example, consider the man who has cheated on his wife with a sexual affair. Though many men may have cheated on their wives in their minds through a fantasy, it is a much more serious offense when the event has happened with the use of one’s one body. Locke discredits the weight of the bodily offense over the mind offense by utilizing consciousness as the main source for personhood. Second, Locke must respond to examples which associate personal identity with a specific body. Consider the following thought experiment: Josh is hit by lightning and is instantly struck unconscious. His family and friends mourn in the hospital as he is still alive, but has not yet awakened from the impact of the injury. When he finally arises from unconsciousness, he does not remember any of the faces that greet him in the hospital room. His family and friends are devastated as they embrace the new change. They still love and accept Josh and apart of their family, but are having difficulty with his memory loss. Locke


claims that the family should no longer associate Josh as apart of their family, since his consciousness has obviously drifted into a different body during his state of unconsciousness. If Locke’s view is acceptable, how is the family supposed to find Josh’s new body? Further, who is the new man residing in Josh’s old body? Locke’s position offers worrisome conclusions in this scenario. Third, utilizing the information of the above two concerns: how should one account for moral error within a system of changing bodies? For example, if Josh was married before the lightening struck him, how should his wife respond if he decides to become sexually involved with another woman after his unconscious incident? Is he cheating on his wife if it is a different person in the body of which Josh used to reside? Or should the body of Josh be responsible for the actions which the new person committed in this body? Further, if the body of Josh is caught stealing. Should Josh be charged with the stealing offense, or should the new person be charged with the stealing offense? Locke must address how to resolve situations in which the body attributes personhood and thus negatively affects the moral and relational aspects to a community.

Aquinas however offers helpful resolutions to his position on personal identity when compared with troublesome implications demonstrated within Locke’s view. When embracing a view of personal identity, one must consider how to address these complicated thought experiments that arise with understanding personhood. Aquinas specifically provides an accommodating response for how to resolve a difficult scenario regarding the bodily resurrection of a cannibal and his victim. Cannibalism specifically targets the ‘What am I’ question in that it accounts for the composition of a person’s (or persons’) body in the resurrection. If person A has eaten person B, how does person B account for his material makeup in the final resurrection if the material makeup of his body is now the material makeup of person A’s body? This question aims at how one body can meet the personhood requirements of two different people. Aquinas claims that the body will be returned to whom it first belonged. Within a scenario where a cannibal has consumed both a human body as well as food, Aquinas claims, “only that will rise in him which came to him materially from the other food, and which will be necessary to restore the quantity to his body. In the case of the cannibal who ate human flesh only, what rises in him will be that which he drew from those who generated him, and what is wanting will be supplied by the creator’s omnipotence.”

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77 The thoughts and ideas of this paragraph are taken from Martin, 101.

78 Martin, 101.
resurrection will demonstrate that the material portion of one’s eaten body will return to the one who first owned the body and the second person’s body will be restored with the miracle of bodily resurrection.

Locke also faced the concern with using a bodily personal identity and how these implications would effect the resurrection. He asserts that utilizing consciousness for identifying one’s person thus eliminates the problem for discerning the worries involved with cannibalism (namely, which body belongs to which person). He clarifies with the following illustration:

Locke explicitly tells us that the [hypothetical] case of the prince and the cobbler shows us the resolution of the problem of the resurrection. The case is one in which the soul of the prince with all of its princely thoughts is transferred from the body of the prince to the body of the cobbler, the cobbler's soul having departed. The result of this exchange, is that the prince still consider himself the prince, even though he finds himself in an altogether new body. Locke's distinction between man and person makes it possible for the same person to show up in a different body at the resurrection and yet still be the same person.

Here Locke shows that since the body is not a key feature of personhood, the resurrection is also not problematic since a person’s consciousness (his identity) is not changed or altered whether the body is returned to the prince or the cobbler. Again Locke demonstrates a faulty view of bodily identification which intuitively resides with one’s sense of personal identity. It is a radical theory to presuppose that the body which one has occupied in his entire earthly life will not be associated with him for final accountability. In the same hypothetical scenario, when other people see the cobbler (whose body is now the prince’s), will they not be confused with whether to call him prince or cobbler? Locke must address which body the cobbler will have in the afterlife. In addition to the worries of this puzzle of composition, the question of personhood also clarifies the helpfulness of Aquinas’ view.

IV.iii. Puzzle 3: The Question of Personhood

One final puzzle this paper will examine wrestles with the question of personhood. Namely, this concern addresses a working definition for what it means to be a person (as opposed to a non-person). Thus, in order to give a logical explanation for personhood, one

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79 This section on Locke is repurposed from the author’s previously unpublished work for a conference skills class.

80 Uzgalis.

81 The thoughts and ideas of this section are taken from Olson.
must answer the form, “x is a person if and only if … x …”. Another closely related, but distinct concern involves asking at what point in one’s foetal development does a person emerge. Or, when does a person become a person? Also, what it would take for a chimpanzee or a Martian or an electronic computer to be a person (if they could ever be)?

The subject of Personhood addresses when an individual (or possibly object in this view) begins to be labelled a person and at what precise point (if so) a person ceases to exist.

Aquinas does not present a distinct time frame for when the start of personhood begins. As stated earlier, Aquinas affirms that the definition of personhood is centred with the rational soul. Thus, Aquinas claims that x is a person, if and only if x contains a rational soul (and is wholly a person with body, intellect, will, and relational capacities). Traditional theories of ensoulment have ranged in when a person receives a soul (i.e. some say it is received at quickening, others claim it is after conception). Aquinas claims a foetus begins with a vegetative soul, and then progresses to a sensitive soul before acquiring his association with personhood in the arrival of the rational soul. Aquinas does not believe that a person ceases to exist. He thinks that one’s soul (upon bodily death) is transferred to the position of personal identity until bodily resurrection where a person lives forever in either heaven or hell (determined by the final judgement). Aquinas clarifies that a person is recognised from a non-person in God’s intentionality to give a rational soul to humans, which distinguishes them from non-humans. He states, “Particular individuals have a still more special and perfect existence in rational substances who are masters of their own activity and act of themselves, unlike other things which are acted upon. Therefore singular rational substances receive the special name of persons.”

He also claims that humans can interact with each other in a relational way, which is unique from all other animals and living creatures without personhood. He says, “Well-adjusted home and social relationships are indispensable for the proper welfare of each singular person.”

The problem with this view is the assumption that humans will not cease to exist. Intuitively humans have always ceased on earth with bodily death, and thus until one arrives in the afterlife (if there is an afterlife) it will be difficult to prove the existence of a continuing person.

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82 Olson.

83 Gilby, 392. This quote is taken from Summa Theologica, Ia. XXIX, I.

84 Gilby, 373. This quote is taken from Commentary, VI Ethics, lect.7.
Locke’s view of personal identity also causes numerous problems specifically for discerning the beginning and ending of personal identity as well as the implications of his definition for persons.\textsuperscript{85} For Locke, \(x\) is a person if and only if he has a consciousness (a thinking and intelligent consciousness). A person is distinguishes himself from a non-person in his possession of a conscious. Since Locke claims that identity is from consciousness, a person begins to identify himself or herself when they first experience consciousness. It is worrisome to distinguish whether Locke’s view of personal identity attributes greater length to the period of time (from his view of when consciousness one receives or loses their rational faculties) or whether Locke shortens the time frame when compared with other views of personal identity (i.e. Aquinas’ personhood of the soul which begins when the soul exists and ceases). Recall that Locke’s definition of persons is “a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places.”\textsuperscript{86} He does not state whether or when a foetus obtains personal identity. As such, Locke must respond to several concerning ethical implications. First, if foetus does not retain the capacity to reason and reflect then he/she is not a person.\textsuperscript{87} Hypothetically, Locke may uphold that a foetus is a potential man (that is one who occupies a specific case wherein this non-person is in the very process of becoming a person). This hypothetical view would enable him to avoid accounting for the legality of abortion. Second, Locke’s view of persons does not account for how to label those in a vegetative state, coma, mental retardation, etc. (e.g. Are they persons?).\textsuperscript{88} Locke regrettably does not address man’s preservation when his personal identity (consciousness) is no longer present in the body. More directly, if a body has lost its consciousness, there is no reason to continue in the body’s preservation as it is no

\textsuperscript{85} This section on Locke is repurposed from the author’s previously unpublished work for a conference skills class.

\textsuperscript{86} Locke, 335.

\textsuperscript{87} Though Locke presents a concerning view, one might also question whether Aquinas proposes a better solution for rationality as his view of personhood is primarily centered on the individual substance of rational nature. This topic will be address in the subsequent paragraph.

In fact, similar arguments are used today, (e.g. by David Wiggins denies the idea of Lockean inspiration), namely, that the continuity of personal identity is founded upon memories of past experiences. Thirdly, The case of a person arousing from a coma seem to be a direct refutation of this view, for intuitively there is continuity in personal identity, even after the loss of memories.

One must also address how Aquinas seems to come out of this difficulty with better grips than Locke since Aquinas also centres his view of personhood on an individual substance of rational nature. For example, suppose under Aquinas’ view, one loses his rational faculties, does this mean according to Aquinas, that he is no longer a person? It seems there are a number of viable solutions to this scenario which will still reveal that Aquinas has more worthwhile position than Locke. First, if the rational nature of a person is unavailable, this would suggest that even though the body is “alive” it is for all personhood regulations understood as dead, and the rational nature of a person has proceeded forward to the afterlife. However, a more suited response would be to re-emphasize the unified nature of body and soul which Aquinas proposes. He claims that a soul is incomplete without a body by saying, “It follows that man is not just a soul, but a compound of a body and soul.” Thus, a human is unable to acquire more self-knowledge without the body, only universal truths. He also asserts that the soul is the centre for rational faculty. As such a person with a soul will still exist even if his rational facilities are incomplete or dysfunctional. In order for a person to stop existing, his soul would have to be removed. This is why, according to Aquinas, a person’s life begins and ends when his soul is placed in his body. Aquinas states, “Soul is the first principle of life within living things about us: living things we term animate, things lacking life inanimate. […] Life is in a body because it is a special kind of

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89 This is a radical view from the high regard for the body that is prevalent today. It is currently apparent that people disagree with Locke’s view of consciousness as the source of personhood with their extreme concern for the way their body appears to the rest of society. Most men and women spend lots of time, energy and money to make sure there body is a reflection of the person they want people to think they are (i.e. if they want others to think they are rich, they dress their body with expensive clothing; if they want others to think they are healthy, they spend hours at the gym and purchase high-end quality foods; some products claim you can look younger by altering your body image if a person prefers a youthful identity). From a brief observation of today’s society one would be aloof to propose that the people today think that the body is not apart of what it is that makes someone a person. From an empirical glance, the exact opposite is the case, the body is the primary reflection of a person’s conscious and soul.

90 This scenario would provide for a rather complicated outcome for a situation such as a coma where in fact a person would, hypothetically, under Aquinas’ view, come back to life.

91 Gilby, 195. This quote is taken from Summa Theologica, Ia.lxxv.4.
body; that body is in fact of such a kind comes from a factor which may be called its actuality.”

Thus as Aquinas places animate life with the soul, one can assume that when the body dies, the soul is removed, and continues to exist incompletely until the body is resurrected and reunited with the soul. Similarly, if one loses consciousness (i.e. rational faculties) for an extended period of time (e.g. coma, induced anaesthesia induced sleep, etc.) as long as his body still lives and houses his soul, then seemingly his rational faculties are on hold for a period of time. Aquinas would still consider this state of unconsciousness as enabling the existence of a person, rather it is an incomplete body.

Locke’s emphasis on consciousness also seems to present a deficient view of personhood. If a person is recognized by his intelligence and his ability to think; one might question the far-reaching (and ironically the limiting) boundaries of personhood in this regard. For example, a dog can display that he is thinking about wanting to eat food, his intelligence enables him to grab the crisps out of the cupboard. Is a dog a person since he can both think and respond to the various needs of his body? Or recent studies have demonstrated that not only do rats demonstrate compassion, but display more empathy than some humans have displayed. Maia Szalavitz of Times Magazine online writes, “Rats may not be, well, such rats after all. In the first study of its kind, researchers show that rats engage in empathy-driven behavior, helping to free a trapped cagemate for no reward other than relieving its fellow rat’s distress. Rats chose to help each other out of traps, even when a stash of delicious chocolate chips was on the line.” According to this study, Locke perhaps should also include rats in his view of personhood.

Further, with the development of technology, could one also attribute a computer with person-like qualities? One recent article entitled, Can a Computer Think?, suggests the positive outcome of such an idea. Engor states, “Turing, a mathematician and a pioneer in computer science, proposed that it would someday be possible for a sufficiently advanced computer to think and to have some form of consciousness. How would we know if a computer was conscious? Turing suggested that if a computer and a human being were

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92 Gilby, 195. This quote is taken from Summa Theologica, Ia.Ixxv.I.


94 Other studies demonstrate that various other animals have human behaviour as well (i.e. Elephants care about death, see: http://news.softpedia.com/news/Elephants-Show-Compassion-and-Have-an-Awareness-about-Death-32660.shtml) These research and depth of these animal studies are limitless.
hidden behind a screen, and another human being were given the task of interrogating each of them, it would be reasonable to conclude that the computer was conscious if the interrogator could not distinguish the computer from the human being.”95 Turning claims that no computers have yet to pass the test, but many have come close.96 If technology is able to develop a computer to pass this test, it is a wonder if Locke’s view of personhood should be disregarded altogether, as it is obvious that computers are not persons.

However, in addition to broadening the definition of personhood to include animals and possibly computers, it also diminishes persons who demonstrate little thinking capacity. Consider the freshly born baby who does not have the mental capacity to think or even has the intelligence to know how to sleep on its own without the aid of a thinking and intelligent adult. Is a baby a non-person? Or if the baby has acquired ten percent of his ability to think, does that make him ten percent of a person? Further, Locke insinuates that elderly people who suffer from dementia and other forms of memory loss would not be persons. If this is the case, at what point does a person stop being a person? Consider the grandma who can not remember his child’s name but can remember how to make a chocolate cake. Is the grandma a partial person as her memory fades? Similarly what is an autistic and down syndrome individual if these “things without mental capacity” are not a persons? Locke must address how persons are to interact (e.g. moral codes and conduct) with non-persons. Does a person have an ethical obligation to defend the bodily life of a non-person? Is it a person’s responsibility to care for and aid non-persons or partial persons? Also, how should one handle scenarios in which “a thing,” according to Locke’s definition of personhood, drifts in and out of becoming a person? For example, a person with mental retardation can be taught to eat, interact with others, and sign for what they desire. However, oftentimes these simple tasks can be obscured during a difficult day or period of time. Thus, according to Locke’s definition of personhood, a mentally retarded person should only to be regarded as a person when he can perform these thinking tasks. Clearly Locke’s position of personhood presents

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96 Turning suggests it is important to clarify what one means when using the term “think”.

worrying concerns as his view of personhood limits individuals to unsatisfactory criteria.\textsuperscript{97} Aquinas’ view of persons is more helpful on an overall assessment as the following section will seek to conclude.

V. Aquinas presents a better solution than Locke

Locke’s presentation of the mind/body problem is independently worrisome in that it does not account for our intuitions. It is unnatural and seemingly inappropriate to imagine oneself with a various interchange of different bodies and souls in a constant potential flux throughout each period of unconsciousness. Further, if his theory is accurate, why is it there not a current phenomenon of one’s consciousness interchanging with different bodies during unconscious states? Or more appropriately, one might question whether there is one mere testimonial evidence wherein a fully functioning rational person would admit that he has changed bodies during a state of unconsciousness. If there were such a testimony, it would be hard to imagine that anyone would believe his story as such a tale is too radical a view to uphold. Aquinas’ view of personal identity is very intuitive. Humans naturally think of themselves with a singular intellect, soul, and body of which comprises their personal identity. One’s sense of ethics is intuitively bound in one’s individual and unchanging soul and intellect. Similarly, it is a natural response to recounts memories of oneself through looking back through old photos of one’s body. Though the properties of his body may have changed, it would seem absurd to see a photo album of one’s childhood with pictures of a person’s different bodies. This person would be considered mentally unstable (which is ironic as Locke’s view is centred on mental faculties). It is a natural idea to consider a person which retains the same body and soul throughout the course of their entire lifetime.

Additionally, Locke’s view of personhood places its primary emphasis on a weak source.\textsuperscript{98} Human memory is not perfectly reliable. There are numerous instances wherein the intellect has failed to produce its function of providing correct information. For example, consider the drunk man who cannot act according to his normal sense of judgement; or the tired mom who pours coffee into her child’s sippy cup; or the student who forgets the date

\textsuperscript{97} Consider also how this theory leads towards a disastrous abuse of the sanctity of human life. Wherein humans are limited to a precise category and the rest are deemed unfit for society. Hitler is one such extreme example in which he regards the only persons fit for deserving earthly life were the best of society (non-jews, light colored features, non-deformities). Though Locke’s definition of persons is not as radical as Hitler’s position, it is helpful to see how limiting persons to a particular categorical assessment can lend towards dangerous outcomes.

\textsuperscript{98} The author, in a previous unpublished paper for a Conference Skills class, presented some of the original thoughts in this section.
of his deadline for essay submission. All of these common illustrations point to a deficiency in the key area which Locke pins for the location of one’s identity. It seems concerning to associate one’s identity with such a fleeting source for information. Locke’s view of personhood would contain a richer and fuller arrangement if he were to associate identity with other faculties besides consciousness. Aquinas utilizes this multi-faceted function of personhood in that he features the body, soul, intellect and will for one’s identity. Similar to Locke, Aquinas places primary emphasis on one’s rational faculties (located within the soul), but he also reiterates that a person is not complete without his body. Though there is an intermediary stage wherein Aquinas attributes personal identity with the soul alone (the stage between bodily death and bodily resurrection) he admits that this period is not ideal or a reflection of a whole person.

Aquinas’ view of personhood better accounts for a moral framework than that which is portrayed in Locke’s account of ethics. Though traditional views of morality have varied throughout the years, it is necessary for a community to function within a set of boundaries and guidelines of moral conduct. Aquinas claims that a person comprehends a sense of right and wrong from natural law. Man utilizes his rational faculties in the soul to understand and determine how to act within a society (knowing that he will be held accountable in an ultimate sense at the final judgement). Although Aquinas’ status on morality is not without critique, it presents a natural method of morality which is not explicitly radical or uncommon in certain societies. Locke’s view of personhood demonstrates a perplexing model of earthly moral reward and punishment and his position for moral accountability is troublesome at best. Locke claims that one should be held accountable for his moral choices that are accomplished from within his consciousness. If there are periods of unconsciousness wherein a moral act was made (i.e. consider drunkenness) God will bring these memories to mind. There are a few concerning thoughts to consider in this interpretation of personhood. It seems that this view of morality would encourage persons to become unconscious. If a person can commit any act during unconsciousness but not be faced with any consequences for that action until the afterlife, it implies that there is a great deal of liberty in one’s earthly state. For example, if a person wants to steal an item, seemingly he can get drunk, accomplish the theft, change bodies, and

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99 To read more about Aquinas and natural law, see the Ralph McInerny, and John O'Callaghan previously listed resource on "Saint Thomas Aquinas".

100 Critiques of Aquinas’ view are not based on the fundamental aspects of his system as the critiques of Locke’s theories deal with the essential aspects.
awake in a refreshed ability to accomplish a similar goal the next night. This type of corruption would quickly lead to an unstable and chaotic community. It is also worrisome to consider how, as Locke claims, God will bring these memories to mind at the final judgment. Why would the memories come to mind at this appointed time instead of after the moral act has been committed on earth? One might question the purpose for sensing guilt in Locke’s system of morality if all of one’s unconscious moral actions are received at one moment during the afterlife. Further, one must examine the guiding methods in Locke’s system for enabling a person to pursue good and avoid evil if his soul is not guaranteed to stay with one’s consciousness. Locke must clarify whether the sense of moral obligation is solely housed in one’s consciousness or if the soul also contains moral guidance. If the soul does contribute to directly a person’s moral actions, then Locke must provide reasoning for how to discern one soul’s input from a different soul’s promptings. As has been thus demonstrated, the theories presented by Aquinas develop a much more appealing model for personhood, morality, and a view of the soul than the insufficiencies displayed from Locke’s position.

Additionally, it is also helpful to briefly discuss a concern in Aquinas’ view of the soul that requires further clarification and resolution. As previously mentioned, Aquinas’ view of personhood would be better suited to have adequately addressed how to account for a circumstance wherein the body is alive, but one’s rational faculties are eliminated. It is unclear if Aquinas thinks that this person is dead (as that which defines him as a person has ceased to work) or if in this scenario his view of personhood is broader than rational faculties as formerly suggested. Furthermore, even with this deficiency, one can still see that Aquinas’ view of the soul is more reliable and worthwhile than that which has been presented in the works of Locke.

Conclusion

Aquinas and Locke are well-renowned philosophers whose writing merit much research and discussion today. Aquinas has contributed many resources to help both academia and the church consider a unique aspect of the soul when considering both philosophical and theological concerns. His position on this topic is worth further investigation to better resolve the worries associated with contemporary puzzles of personal identity which he did not explicitly address in his personal writing. Locke’s writing on the soul and personhood are worrisome at best. His attempts to reconcile morality and religious concerns are inconsistent and unhelpful when considering the various thought experiments
presented in this paper to reconcile his propositions. This paper has helped to show that
though Aquinas’ position on the soul is unable to fully respond to some of the present puzzles
on personal identity, he view is a much better position than that which has been reflected
from within Locke’s position.

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