

PREFACE

I first became interested in the relationship between Locke's anti-essentialism and his theory of identity in a first-year graduate course on metaphysics taught at Syracuse University by José Benardete. I had until then approached Locke as a "safe", commonsense philosopher, whose metaphysical agenda—constrained as it was by his concept empiricism—was largely geared towards upholding a scientifically enlightened, broadly Christian worldview. I am greatly indebted to Professor Benardete for disabusing me of this understanding of Locke's work. Benardete's Locke was not the Locke that I had been exposed to as an undergraduate, not the Locke that I had found in Copleston's *History of Philosophy*. Rather, he was a profoundly creative and audacious metaphysician, who was justly perceived to be a tremendously *dangerous* philosopher by his more traditional contemporaries. And as much I had admired Copleston's Locke, I have become positively enthralled with Benardete's.

The topics of identity and essentialism have become mainstays of contemporary metaphysics, and it is no understatement to say that Locke's contribution to modern debates on these matters is enormous. My early interest in Locke's work on essentialism and identity-through-time was motivated by two factors. First, although there are a number of obvious and significant conceptual connections between these topics, Locke's own theorizing about identity seems not to have been informed by his critique of essentialism or vice versa. Given the philosophical and historical importance of these theories, Locke has left us with some important work to be done, namely, that of precisely mapping out their logical relationship. And although a few writers have taken up this issue in passing, it has yet to receive the sort of detailed attention that it deserves. It is my hope that the present work will at least partly fill this lacuna. Second, I found it difficult to escape the conclusion that his treatment of identity is baldly inconsistent with his anti-essentialism, inasmuch as he gives persistence conditions for particulars objects in a manner which seems to involve a commitment to some sort of essentialism.

The present work is a substantially revised version of the doctoral dissertation which I wrote at Syracuse University under the guidance of Jonathan Bennett. It would be difficult for me to overstate my gratitude for Professor Bennett's advice and encouragement. There probably isn't a

single section of this work which wasn't significantly influenced by his comments on earlier drafts. If there has ever been a more helpful dissertation advisor, a more devoted scholar, or a more effective teacher of philosophy, I have yet to hear about it. I would like to thank Professor Bennett, in addition, for teaching me two things about the discipline of philosophy: first, that the real work of a philosopher is profoundly *difficult*, more difficult, perhaps, than one could ever have imagined; and second, that this work *pays off* in all sorts of ways, and in particular, that it helps us to become much better at reading, writing and thinking than we otherwise would have been. I can only hope that this work, if not my entire career, will embody these insights in something like the way in which his own work has. It is to him, then, that this work is dedicated.

Portions of this work have already appeared in print. Most of Chapter Two appears in the *Journal of Philosophical Research* (Conn, 2002a); most of Chapter Four appears in *Locke Studies* (Conn 2002b); and a significant portion of Chapter Five appears in the *British Journal for the History of Philosophy* (Conn, 1999). I would like to thank the editors of the journals for graciously allowing me to reprint these materials.

I would also like to thank Michael Jacovides of Purdue University for his extremely helpful comments upon the penultimate version of this work. I am confident that the final version is much stronger as a result. Needless to say, I am solely responsible for any errors which remain. Finally, I would like to thank my wife Debra for her love and support throughout the entire history of this project.



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Conn, C.H.

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