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## **Locke's Man**

John W. Yolton

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**In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:**

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Locke's Man

John W. Yolton

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Much attention has been paid to Locke's discussion of personal identity, his concept of person, the distinction between man and person. In fact, in that discussion there are four terms or concepts: man, self, person, and agent. Around those terms a number of themes, aspects of Locke's thought, are clustered, some more directly related to those terms, others more tangential but still important for our understanding of the thought of Locke. If possible, some sorting out of those four terms could be helpful in reaching an appreciation of the nature and function of man in Locke's account. If we can determine who the agent of action is, find the locus of agency in acting, the source of the power, that nature may be explicated. There are some similarities between the body-mind relation and the man-person relation, similarities which may raise some question of materialism. I think we can say that Locke's man is not born a person, that the man can become a person, develop into one. The boy, the child, grows into a man through education, acquiring the necessary attributes of virtue and rationality. There is a rough analog between the education of a child and the emergence of personhood from a man. Also in Locke's discussion of man there is a firm suggestion of an underlying constitution from which the properties come as their causal source, an intriguing parallel between the constitution of man and the corpuscular structure of body.

I propose in this paper to explore these various topics, trusting that the nature of man, of a human being in Locke's account, may become a little bit more clear. Person has perhaps received too much attention; it is man's turn now.

## 1. Action and Agency

Man is a biological organism. "Same man" designates "a participation of the same continued Life, by constantly fleeting particles of Matter [biological matter], in succession vitally united to the same organized Body."<sup>1</sup> We might say **[End Page 665]** man consists of two materialities, corporeal particles and a biological body, but Locke says elsewhere that by the term "man" we mean "a corporeal, rational Creature."<sup>2</sup> The term "rational" clearly adds a non-corporeal property to the corporeal, biological body. Since Locke characterized "person" as having reason, "rational" added to "man" indicates that man and person are not separated or distinct; same reference for "I" but different contributions to the combination of man and person. Person adds something important to man: rationality is added to corporeality. The properties of a person—intelligence, rationality, consciousness—are not identified with or reduced to neurobiological properties nor to material particles.

Several questions can be raised: how do man and person work together, how does agency pertain to the man-person, what is the locus of agency? To say, "I did it," e.g., repayment of a debt, is to say I performed that action in a certain way, with arm or hands or by instructing my banker, etc. Actions require a body, a physical body. As actor, I am both a person and a man. Thus, I am the agent of my actions. We need to ask whether the agency pertains to the unit of man and person, or are there aspects of agency ascribed to the man, others ascribed to the person? Agency involves power, on Locke's account. If we consult the main chapter of the *Essay* where Locke discusses agency and action (2.21), we find that the majority of actions locate the power of acting and deciding with the man. One section at least locates that power with the person: Liberty belongs "to the Person having the Power of doing, or forbearing to do."<sup>3</sup> Several sections give the mind some power relevant to acting. Other passages just refer to "the agent." Frequently references to man and agent occur in the same passage.

*Essay* 2.21.8 credits the man with the power to think and to...

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<sup>1</sup> *Essay*, 2.27.6. See also §8. References to the *Essay concerning Human Understanding* are given in this form, the numbers referring to book, chapter, and/or section.



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