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## **Locke on Personal Identity: A Response to the Problems of His Predecessors**

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### Abstract

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predecessors. Furthermore, the advantage of his theory is that it does not require him to prove the views of his predecessors to be mistaken, and it is thereby consistent with their mutually exclusive views.

# Locke on Personal Identity: A Response to the Problems of His Predecessors

RUTH BOEKER\*

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**KEYWORDS** John Locke, personal identity, afterlife, resurrection, materialism, immaterialism, consciousness

## I. INTRODUCTION

JOHN LOCKE ARGUES THAT PERSONAL IDENTITY consists in sameness of consciousness, and he maintains that any other theory of personal identity would lead to "great Absurdities" (*Essay*, II.xxvii.21).<sup>1</sup> This statement intimates that Locke thought carefully about alternative conceptions of personal identity and their problems. In this paper, I argue that, by understanding Locke's account of personal identity in the context of metaphysical and religious debates of his time, especially debates concerning the afterlife and the state of the soul between death and resurrection, we can reveal the strengths of his view and show how his account of personal identity in terms of sameness of consciousness has the resources to avoid problems that arise for the views of his predecessors.

<sup>1</sup>All references to Locke's *An Essay concerning Human Understanding* are according to book, chapter, and section number in Peter Niddich's edition published by Oxford.

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