LOCKE STUDIES

Vol. 19

<https://doi.org/10.5206/ls.2019.7926> | ISSN: 2561-925X

Submitted: 13 MAY 2019

Published online: 17 JUNE 2019

For more information, [see this article's homepage.](#)

© 2019. Matthew Priselac

Review of *Consciousness in Locke*

MATTHEW PRISELAC (UNIVERSITY OF OKLAHOMA)

Abstract:

A review of Shelley Weinberg's recent book, *Consciousness in Locke*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

Keywords: consciousness, idea, identity, knowledge

Locke Studies is published by [The John Locke Society](#).

This is an open access article published under the terms of the [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International](#) license, which permits use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited and shared under the original license.

Weinberg, Shelley. *Consciousness in Locke*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. 240 pp. \$74 (hbk). ISBN 9780198749011.

Reviewed by MATTHEW PRISELAC

Locke scholarship is flourishing, and Shelley Weinberg's *Consciousness in Locke* is an important contribution to it—as evidenced by its *Journal of the History of Philosophy* Book Prize. *Consciousness in Locke* illuminatingly paints Locke's theoretical philosophy not as an amalgam of a theory of mental contents together with some ontology of minds and persons but as a theory of cognition. Weinberg shows that as Locke traces the origins of thoughts to experience, he describes not just how our thoughts have the contents they have but also what the mind does in thinking such thoughts. So, for example, she nicely explains how even the perception of a single simple idea involves much more than having a simple idea in mind. I believe that Weinberg is undoubtedly correct and genuinely advances our understanding of the Lockean mind.

Weinberg argues that Locke's philosophy makes systematic and fundamental use of consciousness in ways that have not been appreciated or understood. Specifically, consciousness plays an essential role in Locke's epistemology, theory of personal identity, and account of moral motivation. Weinberg thus sets herself a two-fold task. The first is to say what consciousness *is* for Locke. The second is to say what consciousness *does* in Locke's philosophy. Though the tasks have some independence, the interpretation developed in the first task stands to gain plausibility by providing insight into how Locke thought consciousness plays the roles described in the second task. Weinberg's two tasks and their interconnection will structure this review. First, we'll consider Weinberg's account of what consciousness is for Locke. Second, we'll consider the degree to which her interpretation of consciousness gains credit by illuminating the roles she claims consciousness plays.

1. What is Consciousness in Locke

On the face of it, Locke doesn't obviously give consciousness a central role in his philosophy. After naming Sensation and Reflection as the two sources of ideas, his discussions of the fundamental operations of the mind—perception (II.ix),¹ the retentive powers of memory and contemplation (II.x), the cognitive powers of repeating, compounding, comparing, and discerning or abstraction (II.xi)—don't mention consciousness at all. Similarly, the *Essay*'s Introduction defines "Idea" and promises an account of knowledge and reasonable opinion but fails to mention consciousness. Consciousness appears in the introduction to the theory of ideas (II.i) but only to block an inference from the observation that we (persons) are always thinking to the conclusion that thinking is essential to souls (II.i.11–12).

Despite this paucity of explicit mentions of "consciousness," Weinberg argues that consciousness is a primitive element in the Lockean mind not explicable in terms of ideas, Sensation, Reflection, or other mental operations on ideas. Consciousness is, "a reflexive

¹ Citations to the *Essay* will be in standard form (Book.Chapter.Section). When page numbers are included they will be given as (Book.Chapter.Section/page number). Page numbers refer to the Nidditch edition of the *Essay* from Clarendon Press.

self-referential awareness internal to ordinary perception” (32).² It is not a higher-order thought, “a mental act *additional* to the original perceiving of an idea, but rather an awareness *internal* to it” (33; emphasis in the original).

A consequence of Weinberg’s primitivist interpretation is that *all* thinking is complex even when its object is not: “constituent in each perception of an idea is the idea perceived, as well as the consciousness of ourselves as perceiving it ... every act of perception has an object—an idea ... But also Locke thinks there is an element of reflexivity internal to every perception, which allows for an awareness of and referring of the perception to myself” (33). The complex mental state of perceiving ideas is propositionally structured: “perceptions of ideas are propositional in that they have structured content the perception of which constitutes knowing an idea” (69–70). Since both consciousness and ideas contribute content to propositions we know merely in perceiving an idea, then, it is important that consciousness is an *element* of mental acts of perception in just the way that an idea is an *element* in such acts.

2. Why isn’t Consciousness Reflection?

Weinberg’s primitivism is striking because a central piece in Locke’s philosophy of mind—Reflection—seems a natural home for consciousness. Weinberg’s case for primitivism about consciousness in Locke thus comes out most clearly in her case against locating consciousness in Reflection.

The core of her case is a regress problem. Reflection, for Locke, is the passive means for receiving ideas of the operations of our mind as it operates on its ideas (II.i.4).³ When a person remembers rather than sees that a chicken crossed the road, Reflection produces a simple idea of memory in their mind (annexed to the idea of the chicken crossing the road [II.x.1–2]) so that the thought of the chicken is a memory (as opposed to, e.g., a sensory experience). This account of Reflection appears to generate the following, finite-mind-busting infinite regress of ideas. Insofar as I remember that *p*, I have an idea of memory received through Reflection. But to say that I receive an idea of memory is to say that I perceive it. Perceiving is a mental operation, so insofar as my mind perceives the idea of memory, Reflection must also deliver an idea of perceiving—call it perceiving₁. Again, however, perceiving₁ is an idea, so the mind perceives *it*; thereby operating about *it*. Reflection delivers an idea of *that* operation, producing another idea of perceiving: perceiving₂. And so on.⁴

² All “(integer)” citations refer to pages of *Consciousness in Locke*.

³ Note that Weinberg herself primarily attacks Reflection-based interpretations of consciousness that treat Reflection as higher-order thought rather than a source of passively received simples. This difference isn’t especially relevant here as the regress looks like it impacts both an idea-based and higher-order-thought-based interpretation of Reflection.

⁴ I focus here on Weinberg’s philosophical, as opposed to textual, arguments against locating consciousness in Reflection because her main textual-focused criticism of Reflection based accounts of consciousness—that Locke claims both that everyone is always conscious of thinking through at least obscure notions of their mental operations and also that children lack clear ideas of their mind’s operations—has no purchase against a textually plausible account of Reflection as a source of ideas. Given Locke’s identification of notions with ideas (I.i.8), there’s no tension between Locke’s claims. Children have obscure ideas of their mental operations from Reflection. These ideas make the thoughts what they are but are not—in the terminology Locke explains in the *Epistle* as a replacement for “clear and

According to Weinberg, this kind of regress is best avoided by abandoning Reflection as the means of our fundamental awareness of our mental operations. A new primitive—consciousness—gets the job. Consciousness stops the infinite regress because being conscious is not a matter of perceiving a new idea. It is part and parcel of the very perception of an idea, a component of perceiving (or operating about ideas in any way) rather than a special case of perceiving. Nevertheless, even though consciousness is a part of, one's thinking, e.g., that it's too early for the dogs to be barking, such consciousness has its own content. Namely, one is conscious of thinking that it's too early for the dogs to be barking.

Two problems arise. The first, as Weinberg notes, is a textual problem. Locke's broad definition of "idea" seems to rule out non-idea directed modes of thought. An idea is *whatever* is the object of thought, whatever we are employed about when we think (I.i.8). Since being conscious of thinking that it's too early for the dogs to be barking is a form of thinking with content, the mind is employed about *something*. By Locke's definition of "idea" that object of the mind is an idea.

Second, it isn't clear how making consciousness *internal* to perception avoids a finite-mind-busting infinity. The regress is simply in a different "direction." The "upward," higher-order regress driven by a higher order thought interpretation of consciousness (or Reflection as a passive source of ideas) is the kind of regress you get by starting with a photo, taking a photo of that first photo, of which you take another photo, etc. In such a regress, each new photo is distinct, a (causal) descendant of the previous photo. But internal complexity generates an infinite regress just as easily—spiraling inward instead of upward. To continue the image analogy, an infinite inward regress of images occurs when two mirrors face one another. In the mirror case, the infinite complexity is internal to the "initial" image.

An infinite inward regress of consciousness works as follows. In thinking that it's too early for the dogs to be barking, I am conscious of thinking that thought. This consciousness is not a distinct higher order thought but part of thinking the initial thought. But why, then, are we not also conscious of being conscious of thinking that it's too early for the dogs to be barking? Such consciousness would be internal to—part and parcel of—being conscious of thinking that it's too early for the dogs to be barking. After all, both thinking the first-order thought and being conscious of thinking the initial thought are modes of thinking with content.

Weinberg's reply to these problems⁵ brings out the depth of her primitivism about consciousness—her Locke is a dualist about thought.⁶ There are simply two types of thinking: mere thinking, which is idea-directed and involves consciousness, and

distinct"—determined. That is, they have not been discerned by the child (made into an abstract idea) to allow her to make judgments *about* her own mental states. So, children can *have* memories because Reflection produces a simple idea of memory annexed to another idea when a child is remembering, but children cannot *judge that* they are having memories because they have no abstract ideas of the mental operations of memory that they can apply to their own thoughts.

⁵ Though Weinberg acknowledges the first in the text, she does not acknowledge the second. Her reply to the first in what follows suffices as a response to the second.

⁶ Weinberg approvingly cites Thiel, *The Early Modern Subject*, before adding some further development and defense of the idea (39–43).

consciousness itself, which neither is idea directed nor involves (further) consciousness. In the end, then, nothing about consciousness itself—an internal self-referential component to thinking—makes it a better solution to an infinite regress problem than treating consciousness as the deliverances of simple ideas from Reflection. Rather, the regress stops by stipulation that consciousness just doesn't invite more consciousness.

Weinberg's treatment of consciousness in Locke thus resembles Berkeley's dualism between ideas and notions. Our thought of ourselves and our own mental activities just aren't like the rest of our thinking. Framed as a dualism about thought, however, we return with more force to the first problem for using primitive consciousness to avoid infinite regress. Locke doesn't seem interested in drawing Berkeley's distinction. For Locke, by definition, *whatever* is the object of thought is an idea. Moreover, given a plausible interpretation of Reflection as a route by which simple ideas enter the mind rather than as constituting higher-order judgments about our own thinking, it's not clear why simple ideas from Reflection must generate further ideas. After all, these simple ideas are in the mind as part of the perception (or memory or whatever operation by which the mind is employed about its ideas on that occasion) of some idea, so they *themselves* are not operated about by the mind on that occasion.⁷

Having seen *what* consciousness is for Weinberg's Locke—a non-ideational mode of thought, internal to any act of thinking except other instances of consciousness—we can now examine the role Weinberg gives it throughout Locke's philosophy.

3. The Role of Consciousness in Locke's Epistemology

Weinberg first explores the role of consciousness in Locke's epistemology. Specifically, she argues that the account of consciousness can solve two kinds of puzzles within Locke's epistemology. These puzzles stem from a tension between his definition of knowledge as the perception of an agreement between two ideas and cases of knowledge that seems to involve only one idea.

Knowing our ideas: For Locke all our knowledge rests on knowing our ideas. How can knowing *an* idea amount to perceiving an agreement *between* ideas? What other ideas are involved?

Knowledge of real existence: For Locke we know both our own existence and the existence of finite sensible objects immediately, without reasoning. Given Locke's definition of knowledge, though, how can we know that something exists beyond our ideas by perceiving an agreement between ideas?⁸

Weinberg's solution to these puzzles draws in the same way on her account of

⁷ Weinberg cites LoLordo, *Locke's Moral Man*, as attempting a similar move, though notes that LoLordo's Locke avoids a regress through the lack of attention paid to such ideas (40–42).

⁸ Notice that Weinberg does not include knowledge of God in this family of problems even though the basic issue is the same (see, e.g., Rockwood, "Locke on Knowledge of Existence"). The difference is in the grounds of our knowledge—we prove the real existence of God but immediately (either intuitively or sensitively) know our real existence and that of finite sensible objects. Knowledge of God isn't relevant here, then, because it is not grounded in consciousness as are the other cases.

consciousness. Specifically, she draws on the complexity involved in perceiving an idea due to consciousness. We have seen two of the elements involved in the complex state of perceiving an idea: the idea perceived and consciousness of ourselves perceiving the idea. Drawing on II.vii, Weinberg adds another element—the idea of existence, annexed to the idea perceived. So, the perception of any idea (Idea X) involves:

1. Idea X
2. The idea of existence, annexed to idea X
3. Consciousness of ourselves perceiving Idea X (with the idea of existence annexed)

Since the perception of even a single idea involves these elements, even the perception of a single idea also involves enough complexity to allow a perception of agreement *between* mental entities (ideas and/or consciousness).

Weinberg's consciousness-derived solutions to these puzzles raise two significant questions which we'll take up in the following sections: first, concerning the nature of propositional thought in the Lockean mind; second, concerning the sense in which ideas are foundational for knowledge.⁹

4. Propositions and the Lockean Mind

Let's consider in more detail the propositions known in knowing our ideas, our existence, or the existence of sensible objects. They are, according to Weinberg:

(Idea)	The idea [i.e., Idea X] is as I'm perceiving it to be. ¹⁰
(Self)	I exist as perceiving an [this?] idea [i.e., Idea X].
(External)	Actual real existence agrees to Idea X.

Given Weinberg's account of knowing these different propositions, we have a tension. On the one hand, we know our ideas, our existence, and the existence of sensible objects by perceiving an agreement between the *same* three elements—1, 2, and 3 above.¹¹ On the other hand, in each case we know *a different* proposition—(Idea), (Self), and (External). To see the tension, consider Locke's account of propositions.

Propositions are formed by joining or separating signs (IV.v.2), which are either words (verbal propositions) or ideas (mental propositions). Ideas are joined (or separated) by

⁹ Smaller questions arise as well. For example, the idea of existence is not unique in being annexed to every perceived idea, according to Locke. The idea of unity is also annexed to every idea (II.vii.7). So, by whatever rights the idea of existence enters into the complex mental state involved in perceiving an idea, so too does the idea of unity. Why isn't it reflected in the propositional content of thought given that it is connected with consciousness and the perceived idea in exactly the same way as the idea of existence? For another, it isn't clear what interpretive value is purchased here with Weinberg's primitivism about consciousness. Weinberg contrasts her interpretation of sensitive knowledge of real existence with the use of Reflection by Nagel "Sensitive Knowledge" and Allen "Locke and Sensitive Knowledge," but it isn't clear what advantages consciousness has compared to these Reflection based views.

¹⁰ Weinberg adds a slightly different gloss to bring out the importance of the idea of existence: (Idea*) "The idea [i.e., Idea X] is as it really exists in the mind" (78).

¹¹ The only qualification that needs to be added here is that (External) is only possible when Idea X is an idea received from Sensation rather than produced in the mind on that occasion in some other way, e.g., by memory. (Idea) and (Self) are known for all ideas when they are perceived.

perceiving (knowing) or presuming (judging) their agreement (or disagreement) (IV.v.5).¹² For the sake of argument, let's grant that consciousness can play the role of ideas in mental propositions.

Different propositions known must be distinguished somehow in the mind. Since Weinberg believes that the same elements are perceived to agree in each case, the propositions must be distinguished in the mind by our perceiving *different agreements* between the same elements. Here Weinberg's interpretation runs into three unpalatable options.

One way to accommodate different agreements between the same ideas is through complexity in the items perceived to agree.¹³ Complex idea ABC agrees with complex idea ACE in many ways: with respect to A, with respect to C, with respect to the conjunction of A with C, etc. However, the elements involved in the complex state of perceiving an idea cannot agree in different ways by agreeing with respect to their component parts. Some of the elements either *are* simple ideas (as in the case of the idea of existence) or *can be* (the idea X).¹⁴

A second way to accommodate different agreements between the same ideas is by agreement in different *aspects* of the ideas (or constituents). Unfortunately, since Locke defines an idea as whatever is the object of thought this approach will require abstract ideas to explain such knowledge. If we perceive an agreement between aspects of ideas, then those aspects are the objects of our thought (i.e., the aspects of the ideas are perceived to agree). But this means that the object of our thought is an abstract idea. In other words, two ideas which agree in some aspects but not others, agree with respect to some abstract ideas but not others. For example, simple ideas can agree *as* simple ideas in this way even though being simple isn't a *part* of such ideas.¹⁵

While there is nothing problematic about such knowledge *per se* within Locke's epistemology, such knowledge is not a good fit for Weinberg's purposes. For Weinberg this is knowledge at the root of cognition, knowledge we have *in the mere perception* of ideas.¹⁶ Abstract ideas have no place here as abstraction is downstream from mere perception. Indeed, as we will see in the next section, Weinberg explicitly rejects the use of abstract ideas for explaining our knowledge of (Idea).

Finally, a third way to explain the nature of different agreements between the same ideas is the least palatable yet. Perhaps different agreements are *brute* features of the

¹² Note, then, that Weinberg's account is in immediate trouble with Locke's account of propositions since (mental) propositions are formed by putting together ideas in either perceiving or presuming their agreement or disagreement. There is no room for consciousness. Weinberg replies, "the signs we use to compose those propositions, Locke says, are 'chiefly' ideas and words. Therefore, there can be cases in which a sign is used to form the proposition is not an idea or a word. Therefore, it can be consciousness" (80). However, propositions are constituted by *signs*, and it is less clear how *consciousness* is a sign, and if it is a sign, then it is less clear what it is a sign of.

¹³ I have in mind what Bolton, "The Taxonomy of Ideas," has called compositional parts.

¹⁴ Which is to say nothing of what to make of aspects of consciousness.

¹⁵ See Nelson and Landy, "Qualities and Simple Ideas," for this point in Hume.

¹⁶ See section 3.I.2 of *Consciousness in Locke*, "Perceptions of Ideas Convey Knowledge," 70–73.

Lockean mind. Such a move is drastic because it abandons Locke's fundamental project to explain the nature and bounds of knowledge by giving an account of the origins of ideas. If Locke took agreements as brute features capable of explaining knowledge" then he ought to have investigated *those* instead (or alongside) of ideas.

In the end, then, Weinberg's solution to the three cases of knowledge involving one idea raises deep questions about the nature of propositions in the Lockean mind and how they are formed. What *should* we do with agreements? Agreements provide the structure by which elements—ideas and, if Weinberg is right, consciousness—are formed into propositions. Properly understanding the Lockean mind and Locke's account of knowledge requires carefully examining what explains this structure given the resources in Locke's philosophy of mind.¹⁷

5. Ideas and Ways of Perceiving Ideas

Weinberg's treatment of knowledge of our own ideas is also interesting for the questions it raises concerning how all our knowledge rests on knowing our ideas. To begin, let's consider her case that (Idea) describes the form of our foundational knowledge of our ideas. As we will see in Weinberg's case for (Idea), for Weinberg's Locke we know what can be called *plain* propositions—propositions about colors or trees or numbers—by inferring them from our knowledge of propositions *about* ideas—propositions about our ideas of a color or ideas of trees or ideas of numbers. Knowledge of ideas serves as an inferential base for the rest of our knowledge. In this section I aim to raise doubts about this kind of interpretation of the role of ideas in Locke's epistemology.

Locke's initial description of knowledge of our ideas doesn't sound like (Idea). He introduces knowledge of our ideas as knowledge of identity (IV.i.4). An agreement of identity is between a thing and itself (IV.i.4). His example of knowledge of diversity (i.e., not-identity) is that blue is not yellow (IV.i.7).¹⁸ So, Locke's discussion of knowledge of ideas suggests that the proposition expressing such knowledge is not (Idea) idea but:

(Identity) Idea X is idea X.

Weinberg offers a three-part case for (Idea) over (Identity). First, (Identity) isn't the right kind of knowledge to be epistemologically foundational. Second, all *distinct* ideas are *distinguished* ideas. Since ideas are distinct merely as the ideas they are, Weinberg suggests, all ideas are distinguished by us merely in perceiving them. Knowing a proposition like (Idea) for an idea counts as distinguishing it. Third, Weinberg leans on passages in which Locke says we know our ideas merely on first sight. All three of these deserve detailed engagement, but I here have space only to address the initial line of argument and associated smaller criticisms of (Identity) as it motivates the rest of her case.

Weinberg begins her case against taking (Identity)-type propositions as the form of our foundational knowledge of ideas by noting that such propositions are what Locke calls

¹⁷ Priselac's *Locke's Science of Knowledge* pursues the possibility that such structure is provided by mental operations and their attendant simple ideas from Reflection.

¹⁸ Other examples continue this in this mold: That white is not black, that a circle is not a triangle (IV.ii.1), a soul is a soul, "a Fetich is a Fetich" (IV.viii.3), or at its most abstract, "what is, is" (IV.viii.3). Such knowledge is achieved by "immediate comparison" (IV.ii.2; IV.iii.2–3).

“trifling” (IV.viii). “Surely,” she says, “our knowledge of our own ideas cannot be the result of tautological propositions that impart nothing substantive, for Locke considers this kind (propositional) knowledge foundational” (73). This initial step in her case, though, is problematic because the propositions which express the definitions in Euclid’s *Geometry* are *trifling* for Locke because they merely state definitions. Nevertheless, Locke holds that we derive our largest body of instructive knowledge (e.g., “the external angle of all triangles is bigger than either of the opposite internal angles” [IV.viii.8]) from these (trifling) definitions (e.g., “a triangle hath three sides” [IV.viii.7]).

A second prong in Weinberg’s case against taking (Identity)-type propositions to express foundational knowledge rests on the claim that (Identity)-type propositions presuppose knowledge of (Idea)-type propositions. This is because Weinberg understands (Identity)-type propositions as knowledge that two token ideas are of the same type (rather than, as Locke says, that an idea is *itself*). However, Weinberg says, to compare two tokens we must first know them individually as they are (and presumably also know the type, which we then see that the two tokens share).¹⁹ So, (Identity) propositions can’t express foundational knowledge of our ideas.

Weinberg’s argument here rests on a problematic interpretation of comparison which takes too much from Locke’s analogy between comparison and juxtaposition.²⁰ Knowledge of ideas arises from comparing an idea *with itself*, according to Locke (e.g. II.xi.1, IV.i.5). But an idea cannot be juxtaposed with itself. No individual thing can be literally juxtaposed with itself even if everything can be compared with itself.²¹

Finally, since Weinberg’s case for taking knowledge of our ideas to be expressed in (Idea)-type propositions largely amounts to the claim that they provide better epistemological foundations, it is worth examining whether they really do. In one way, at least, they do worse than (Identity)-type propositions. Consider Locke’s first example of knowing our ideas: *Blue is not yellow*. On the (Identity) interpretation we compare an idea of blue with an idea of yellow. Comparing distinct ideas merely with respect to one another just is perceiving that they are not the same idea. Similarly, comparing an idea with itself just is perceiving that it is itself. The knowledge, as Locke so often says, is immediate to the comparison. On the (Idea) interpretation, however, this knowledge is not immediate. Rather, it is founded on knowledge of each idea individually—i.e., the knowledge expressed by (Idea)-type propositions for each idea.

Here is the reasoning by which our knowledge that blue is not yellow is founded on knowledge of our ideas:

- My idea of blue is as I perceive it to be.
- My idea of yellow is as I perceive it to be.

¹⁹ We here see Weinberg herself rejecting a role for abstract ideas in foundational knowledge of ideas. I take it, then, that she would reject the second of the two proposed options for understanding multiple agreements between ideas.

²⁰ She writes, “Locke confirms ... that we know agreements just in virtue of comparing ideas, which I take to mean merely having them juxtaposed” (72).

²¹ Perhaps a more illuminating analogy is the kind of comparison we do by grasping objects with two hands at the same time. Such a model of comparison affords that the same object may be simultaneously grasped.

- I don't perceive my ideas of blue and yellow to be the same.
- So, my ideas of blue and yellow are not the same. That is, blue is not yellow.

It's unclear why we should regard this conclusion as better founded than the (Identity)-type proposition in which the knowledge is immediate to comparison of ideas. In both cases knowledge depends on a comparison and un-analyzed grasp of difference. In the (Idea) case, it is an unanalyzed grasp of difference between *how two ideas appear*. In the (Identity) case, it is an analyzed grasp of the difference between *two ideas*. We here again run up against Locke's definition of "idea" as whatever is the object of thought in a particularly problematic way. Step three treats the object of thought—i.e., what I'm comparing—not as *ideas* but *ways in which I'm perceiving ideas*.

By making (Idea)-type propositions foundational, Weinberg introduces another object for thought—ways of perceiving ideas, or appearances of ideas. These new objects create a new epistemological veil between ideas and what we know by and about those ideas. We *immediately* know our ideas to *appear* a certain way. Thanks to consciousness, according to Weinberg, we know (Idea)-type propositions which tell us that our ideas *really are* as they appear. Knowledge of (Idea)-type propositions allows us to pierce the veil created by idea-appearances between ourselves and our ideas.

On Weinberg's interpretation of Locke's epistemology, then, knowledge of our ideas is foundational in the sense that ideas provide a subject matter about which we have knowledge. We can then use our knowledge of that domain, that subject matter, to draw other conclusions. Weinberg carries this model over to knowledge of our own existence and knowledge of the existence of sensible objects. In each case our knowledge depends on knowing something about our ideas. Given the weaknesses we have seen in the case for (Idea) over (Identity)-type propositions as capturing our foundational knowledge of ideas—trifling propositions *are* suitable foundations; comparison *is* possible between a thing and itself; (Idea)-type propositions introduce a new object of thought and corresponding epistemological veil—I think it is worth rethinking whether the role of ideas in Locke's epistemology is as Weinberg has it. There is too much emphasis on known claims *about ideas* serving as premises from which we draw conclusions. We need another model of the relationship between ideas and knowledge in Locke.²²

6. Conclusion

Weinberg has the big picture right. Locke's readers have collectively failed to wrestle with the ways in which mental activity plays a deep role in his theory of ideas and epistemology. Locke is concerned not only with articulating *what* our ideas are but also with *how* we're employing those ideas. My disagreements concern how to understand Locke's theory of cognition and whether Weinberg's move to consciousness as a new primitive over and above ideas and mental operations works. That move uncomfortably fits with Locke's broad definition of "idea"—the *Essay's* most fundamental explanatory tool—and his account of propositional thought—the *Essay's* explanatory goal as the domain in which

²² Priselac's *Locke's Science of Knowledge* defends an alternative approach on which all knowledge depends on discerning identity and diversity relations among ideas. The paradigm is that of knowing that gold is yellow by discerning that the idea of gold contains the idea of yellow as a part—i.e., ultimately that yellow is yellow. The challenge is then to understand how Locke extends the model of knowledge as containment to cover instructive knowledge and sensitive knowledge of real existence.

knowledge and opinion are distinguished. Moreover, the move to consciousness risks introducing an epistemological veil *inside* the Lockean mind between it and its ideas through ways of perceiving ideas.

I would like to close with some brief comments on the final chapters of *Consciousness in Locke*. Weinberg's discussion of personal identity makes the clearest use of her primitivist interpretation of consciousness. She argues that Locke is a primitivist about consciousness not just within the realm of thought as a special form of awareness but also as an *ontological category*—what she calls a metaphysical fact of consciousness. Consciousness, in other words, stands alongside mind and matter as metaphysical kinds. Locke's dualism within thought between mere thinking and consciousness thus has a basis outside of our understanding. This metaphysical fact of consciousness, Weinberg argues, explains personal identity. Her view is important in scholarship on Locke's theory of personal identity and has been well discussed. A chief value of the chapter in this book is showing how her view on personal identity fits into a broader theory of the Lockean mind.

Finally, Weinberg's discussion of moral motivation advances beyond long-standing debates in Locke scholarship around Locke's introduction of the power to suspend desire and its connection to agency and freedom. For Weinberg's Locke, moral motivation is ordinary motivation that comes from a properly cultivated desire for our long-term happiness and consciousness of the unease tied to that desire. This desire, or concern, gives rise to our ability to judge that we need to suspend our desires for other objects to evaluate how well they fit with our "real Bliss." Consciousness is necessary for freedom and moral agency because it gives us both the grasp of pleasure and pain that motivate us and the ability to extend this concern for pleasure and pain to ourselves in the future over a long enough time frame that we care about our overarching good in comparison to the here and now.

This final chapter beautifully completes Weinberg's big-picture presentation of Locke's philosophy. We see how Locke's account of consciousness, his epistemology, and his account of personhood come together to provide his account of moral motivation and agency. A fitting and satisfying conclusion to an important book which treats Locke as the deeply systematic philosopher he surely is.²³

University of Oklahoma

²³ Thanks to Monte Cook and Alan Nelson for helpful feedback on earlier drafts of this review.

Bibliography

- Allen, Keith. "Locke and Sensitive Knowledge." *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 51, no. 2 (2013): 249–66.
- Bolton, Martha. "The Taxonomy of Ideas in Locke's *Essay*." In *The Cambridge Companion to Locke's 'Essay Concerning Human Understanding'*, edited by Lex Newman, 67–100. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. Edited by Peter Nidditch, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975.
- LoLordo, Antonia. *Locke's Moral Man*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.
- Nagel, Jennifer. "Sensitive Knowledge: Locke on Skepticism and Sensation." In *A Companion to Locke*, edited Matthew Stuart, 313–33. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 2016.
- Nelson, Alan and David Landy. "Qualities and Simple Ideas: Hume and His Debt to Berkeley." In *Primary & Secondary Qualities: The Historical and Ongoing Debate*, edited by Lawrence Nolan, 216–38. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Priselac, Matthew. *Locke's Science of Knowledge*. New York: Routledge Press, 2016.
- Rockwood, Nathan. "Locke on Knowledge of Existence." *Locke Studies* 16 (2016): 41–68.
- Thiel, Udo. *The Early Modern Subject*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Weinberg, Shelley. *Consciousness in Locke*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016.