

LOCKE ON IDEAS OF SUBSTANCES AND MIXED MODES

by

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B.A., Waseda University, 1986

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF  
MASTER OF ARTS

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES  
(Department of Philosophy)

We accept this thesis as conforming  
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

December 1993

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### ABSTRACT

The object of this thesis is to cast a new light on Locke's distinction between ideas of mixed modes and those of substances. The particular interest here is in Locke's frequent remarks about the "arbitrariness" of ideas of mixed modes and the "non-arbitrariness" of ideas of substances.

To develop a satisfactory account of the arbitrariness and non-arbitrariness of ideas, I take note of the fact that, in explaining the reality of ideas, Locke utilizes the difference in the manner in which the two types of complex ideas are made. Particularly, his remark that ideas of substances are all made in reference to actual things is considered.

It will be seen, then, that to "refer" a complex idea to actual things is to suppose the conformity between the idea and them, and also that the "conformity" in this case is understood as the correspondence between the set of qualities specified by that idea and a set of qualities in nature or as the coexistence of such a set in nature. The arbitrariness and non-arbitrariness of the two types of complex ideas is thus explained in terms of the manners in which these ideas are made: while the formation of ideas of substances is propositional in nature, the formation of those of mixed modes is not.

Furthermore, Locke's distinction between ideas and propositions in terms of truth and falsity implies that the reference to actual things is extrinsic to our ideas. Hence, I shall conclude that, for Locke, the difference between ideas of mixed modes and those of substances is characterized as this: that as a contingent fact, ideas of substances are formed in reference to actual things whereas those of mixed modes are not.

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**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

I would like to thank Professor Gary Wedeking of the University of British Columbia for advice and criticism invaluable in the preparation of this thesis.

## INTRODUCTION

The object of this thesis is to cast a new light on Locke's distinction between ideas of mixed modes and those of substances. The particular interest here is in Locke's frequent remarks about the "arbitrariness" of ideas of mixed modes and the "non-arbitrariness" of ideas of substances. A careful consideration of the issue will reveal a crucial difference in the manner in which these ideas are formed: while the formation of ideas of substances is propositional in nature, the formation of those of mixed modes is not.

In Chapter One, three different lines of interpretation of what Locke means by the "arbitrariness" of ideas of mixed modes are examined. According to Leibniz, Locke admits that in the formation of ideas, *any* arbitrary collection of ideas can be bundled together at will. Another possible interpretation may be derived from Locke's own words. There are some passages in the *Essay* which seem to suggest that his real intent with the arbitrariness of mode ideas is to stress the arbitrariness of *language*. In addition to these, another reading of "arbitrariness" is proposed by D.J. O'Connor. On his interpretation, what Locke means by the arbitrariness of ideas of mixed modes is the active role which the mind plays in the formation of these ideas. All these interpretations, however, turn out to be wanting in one important respect: they are unable to provide the reason



why Locke thinks it to be possible to distinguish ideas of mixed modes from those of substances in terms of the arbitrariness of the former.

In Chapter Two, to develop a satisfactory account of the arbitrariness or non-arbitrariness of ideas, I take note of the fact that in explaining properties of ideas, Locke utilizes the difference in the manner in which various types of ideas are made. Particularly, he thinks that the difference in the manner of formation provides the reason for his handling the reality of ideas in accordance with different standards. I shall try to confirm this point through the consideration of his remark in 2.30.4 that mixed modes have "no other reality but what they have in the Minds of Men."

A commentator has criticized Locke by saying that this remark is inconsistent with his admitting the occurrences of such entities in nature in other places. Against this, Aronson and Lewis have proposed a different interpretation according to which the passage in question indicates Locke's view that modes in general lack real essences of their own. A mixed mode being a unified combination of qualities, to deny the existence of real essences which accounts for the union of such qualities, they argue, does not entail the denial of the concurrence of these qualities which come to constitute a mixed mode. And thus, Locke is not inconsistent

in denying the reality of mixed modes while allowing the existence of sets of qualities which come to constitute mixed modes.

This interpretation, however, is made less plausible by the fact that, for Locke, a mixed mode does have a real essence which makes a unity of such a collection of qualities. Moreover, in deriving the absence of real essences in mixed modes from the mind-dependence of the unity of *ideas* of them, they neglect the fact that these ideas are formed without any intention of copying real existence. What explains the mind-dependence of the unity of these ideas is not the absence of modal real essences but the manner in which they are made. It will be seen, then, that when Locke talks of mixed modes as having no reality other than what they have in the mind, his point is that ideas of them are made without reference to real existence. Hence, there is no contradiction between his denial of this intention in the ideas of mixed modes and his allowing the occurrences of mixed modes in nature.

Our next task is thus to clarify what it is to say that ideas are made with/without reference to actual things in nature. In Chapter Three, I shall consider his remark that ideas of substances are all made in reference to "things existing without us." A careful look at the text will make us see at least two points. First, to "refer" a complex idea

to real existence is to suppose the conformity between the idea and some actual things. Secondly, on Locke's theory, the "conformity" in this case is understood as the correspondence between the set of qualities specified by that idea and a set of qualities in nature or as the coexistence of such a set in nature. Hence, when Locke says that ideas of substances are all made in reference to actual things, he means that in the formation of these ideas, the mind makes a supposition that there is a thing in nature in which a certain set of qualities coexist. Furthermore, this interpretation is confirmed through the consideration of Locke's own words including early drafts of the *Essay*.

A possible objection to my interpretation, however, is found in M.A. Stewart's account. According to him, Locke's claim in the drafts that a complex idea of a substance is a kind of affirmation reflects a confusion about what is complex on his compositionism and what is complex on the traditional theory. In other words, Locke is accused of being confused about the distinction between ideas and propositions. In Chapter Four, Locke's view on the distinction between ideas and propositions is considered in order to argue against Stewart's interpretation. A careful look at the text makes us see that Locke was quite familiar with the traditional compositionism and had a clear understanding as to the distinction between ideas and

propositions already at the time of the drafts, and hence his remark that in the formation of substance ideas, the mind makes an affirmation cannot be dismissed as a muddle which he makes because of his failure in the distinction. Moreover, given the understanding of the distinction, it is unlikely that he identifies an idea of a substance with the proposition which the mind makes in the formation of this idea. In fact, Locke does make a distinction between these two as well.

In Chapter Five, the arbitrariness and non-arbitrariness of ideas is explained in terms of the manners in which our ideas are formed. The proposed account of this issue implies that the reference to real existence is contingently attached to our ideas. Against such an interpretation, Martha Brandt Bolton argues that the reference must be included in each substance idea as its component in order that the classification of an idea as substantial or modal be invariable. Bolton's account, however, does not conform to Locke's doctrine in several respects. Most notably, it is in direct conflict with Locke's distinction between ideas and propositions in terms of truth and falsity. Finally, I suggest that for Locke the difference between ideas of mixed modes and those of substances is characterized as this: that as a contingent fact, ideas of substances are formed in reference to actual things while those of mixed modes are not.

## CHAPTER ONE

### LOCKE ON THE ARBITRARINESS OF IDEAS OF MIXED MODES

#### 1.1 LEIBNIZIAN READING OF "ARBITRARINESS"

In his discussion of ideas of mixed modes, Locke often mentions "arbitrariness" as a distinctive character of these ideas.

. . . these *Essences of the Species of mixed Modes*, are not only *made* by the Mind, but made *very arbitrarily* [3.5.3]<sup>1</sup>;

. . . the Mind in mixed Modes arbitrarily unites into complex *Ideas*, such as it finds convenient [3.5.6];

. . . they [ideas of mixed modes] being Combinations of several *Ideas* that the Mind of Man has arbitrarily put together . . . [3.11.15].

Locke's point in these passages seems to be that in the formation of ideas of mixed modes, *any* combination of ideas can be bundled together at will. At least, so it appears to Leibniz. And unsurprisingly, this irritates a champion of rationalism like him. In his *New Essays on Human Understanding*, Leibniz tries, on various occasions, to elucidate the inappropriateness of such a view. For instance, it is said that

. . . it is not within our discretion to put our ideas together as we see fit, unless the combination is justified either by reason, showing its possibility, or by<sub>2</sub> experience, showing its actuality and hence its possibility.

At first glance, this might look like a somewhat familiar picture of scrupulous Leibniz reproving his

careless predecessor. The truth of the matter, however, is not as simple as it appears to be. There are at least two reasons why we should suspect it is not. First, we must see that it is incorrect to say that Locke allows any collection of ideas to be combined into a complex idea of a mixed mode. In the beginning of the chapter on mixed modes in Book II, Locke writes,

. . . to form such ideas [of mixed modes], it sufficed, that the Mind put the parts of them together, and that they were *consistent in Understanding*, without considering whether they had any real Being.<sup>3</sup>

This passage seems to indicate that Locke is not entirely unaware that the formation of ideas of mixed modes involves the compossibility of the constituent ideas. In addition, it is to be observed that Locke appears to take the consistency or compossibility of component ideas to be a sufficient condition for the reality of at least the ideas of mixed modes.

*Mixed modes and Relations*, having no other *reality*, but what they have in the Minds of Men, there is nothing more required to those kinds of *Ideas*, to make them *real*, but that they be so framed, that there be possibility of existing conformable to them. These Ideas . . . *cannot be chimerical*, unless any one will jumble together in them inconsistent *Ideas* [2.30.4].

Locke also remarks that a complex idea is said to be *wrong* if "inconsistent parts are jumbled together" [2.32.26]. Given these remarks of his, it would seem questionable

whether he would ever maintain that any collection of ideas whatsoever can be combined into a complex idea.

This point becomes more evident once we realize that for Locke the arbitrariness of ideas of mixed modes is something which distinguishes them from another type of complex ideas, i.e. those of substances. On the Leibnizian reading, by the "arbitrariness" of ideas of mixed modes, Locke is said to mean that any collection of ideas can be combined into complex ideas of mixed modes. But in such a case, it would be by no means clear why Locke has to hold that the arbitrariness concerns *only* the ideas of mixed modes. Assuming that a complex idea of a mixed mode could be made from any set of ideas, there would seem to be no reason why the same can be said about a complex idea of a substance, since in both cases the mind makes a complex idea by "combining several simple *Ideas* into one compound one" [2.12.1]. Leibniz, of course, does not fail to see this point and wonders about Locke's intention. At one point, Leibniz asks the spokesman of Locke,

why attend so much to the privileged position of ideas of mixed modes when our concern is with ideas in general.<sup>4</sup>

However, it appears to be Locke's invariable position that we can distinguish ideas of mixed modes from those of substances in reference to the former's "arbitrariness." For instance, Locke writes of the difference between them,

. . . these *Essences of the Species of mixed Modes*, are not only *made* by the Mind, but also made *very arbitrarily*, made without Patterns, or reference to any real Existence. Wherein they differ from those of Substances, which carry with them the Supposition of some real Being, from which they are taken, and to which they are conformable [3.5.3].

Now what does this claim indicate? Does it imply that Locke, being unsure of what he means by the "arbitrariness" of ideas, comes to mischaracterize the difference between the two types of complex ideas? On the contrary, it does seem to suggest that it is rather Leibniz who fails to grasp Locke's sense of "arbitrariness" and hence misses a crucial aspect of his distinction between complex ideas of mixed modes and those of substances. Both Locke's awareness that the formation of a complex idea involves the compossibility of its constituent ideas and his belief in the distinction between the two types of complex ideas in terms of "arbitrariness" point to the fact that in the discussion of ideas of mixed modes, Locke is using the term "arbitrariness" in a sense different from Leibniz. That is to say, by the "arbitrariness" of ideas of mixed modes, he does not mean that complex ideas can be made from any set of ideas.

But what, then, does Locke mean by "arbitrariness"? We should keep in mind that a successful interpretation of his actual position on this issue must account for two points: first, it must, of course, explain what he means by the



"arbitrariness" of ideas of mixed modes; secondly, it must also be able to explain why he thinks that this notion can characterize the difference between complex ideas of mixed modes and those of substances.

## 1.2 THE ARBITRARINESS OF LANGUAGE?

Locke's account of what he means by the "arbitrariness" of ideas of mixed modes seems to be found in the chapter on the names of mixed modes and relations in Book III. For instance, it is said that

. . . the Mind in mixed Modes arbitrarily unites into complex *Ideas*, such as it finds convenient; whilst others that have altogether as much union in Nature, are left loose, and never combined into one *Idea*, because they have no need of one name. 'Tis evident then, that the Mind, by its free choice, gives a connexion to a certain number of *Ideas*, which in Nature have no more union with one another, than others that it leaves out [3.5.6].

At first glance, Locke's point appears to be that in the formation of ideas of mixed modes, any combination of ideas can be united into one idea by the mind, and it is in this sense that ideas of mixed modes are arbitrary. As we have seen, Leibniz criticizes such a view by saying that a combination of ideas can be united together as far as they are mutually consistent, and therefore even ideas of mixed modes are not arbitrary.

The question, however, is whether this is really what Locke means in that passage. He seems to be addressing a slightly different issue when he writes in the same section that

. . . what greater connexion in Nature, has the *Idea* of a Man, than the *Idea* of a Sheep with Killing, that this is made a particular Species of Action, signified by the word *Murder*, and the other not? Or what Union is there in Nature,

between the *Idea* of the Relation of a Father, with Killing, than that of a Son, or Neighbour; that those are combined into one complex *Idea*, and thereby made the Essence of the distinct Species *Parricide*, whilst the other make no distinct Species at all? [3.5.6].

In this passage, Locke compares the set consisting of the idea of killing and that of a man with another set consisting of the idea of killing and that of a sheep (and the one consisting of the idea of killing and that of a father with the other consisting of the idea of killing and that of a son or neighbour) and asks why only the former is united into one complex idea and thereby becomes a nominal essence of the species *murder*. Apparently, the reason for this inquiry is that there is no difference at all among these collections of ideas in their being found to occur together in nature. In addition to the quoted passage, Locke writes,

*Men . . . make several Combinations of simple Ideas into distinct, and, as it were, settled Modes, and neglect others, which in the Nature of Things themselves, have as much aptness to be combined, and make distinct Ideas* [2.22.5];

they [complex ideas of mixed modes] be Combinations made of *Ideas*, that are loose enough, and have as little union in themselves, as several other, to which the Mind never gives a connexion that combines them into one *Idea* [3.5.7].

It would seem, then, that when Locke says that the mind arbitrarily makes a collection of ideas into a complex idea of a mixed mode and leaves out others, all of these

collections are already supposed to be those which are found to occur together in nature, and hence to be possible.

Locke's point is that in the formation of the ideas of mixed modes, the mind arbitrarily chooses a certain collection of ideas out of such possible collections each of whose component ideas are mutually consistent. That is, the "arbitrariness" is understood in the sense that it is up to the mind *which collection* of ideas it would make into a complex idea of a mixed mode, but not in the sense that any collection of ideas can be combined into such a complex idea. This appears to be what he means when it is said that "the Mind in mixed Modes arbitrarily unites into complex Ideas, such as it finds convenient; whilst other that have altogether as much union in Nature, are . . . never combined into one Idea." This is simply to say that there is no necessity to choose a certain set of ideas over other sets which are also found to be occurring together in nature.

But why, then, does Locke insist that *ideas* of mixed modes are arbitrary? For if these collections of ideas which come to be made into complex ideas of mixed modes are already understood as possible ones, there seems to be nothing "arbitrary" about the formation of these collections. One might even suspect that these collections are, in effect, complex ideas, and that Locke's explanation is in no sense concerned with the issue of how complex ideas

of mixed modes are made.

Once Locke's account of "arbitrariness" is understood in this way, it might be said that in that account, Locke is trying to demonstrate the arbitrariness of the relation between names and ideas, rather than that of ideas of mixed modes. If for Locke those collection of ideas *are* complex ideas, to choose a certain collection and leave out others seems to amount to giving a name to the former. In fact, Locke says that "in the making . . . of the Species of mixed Modes, Men have had regard only to such Combinations, as they had occasion to mention one to another" [3.5.7]. But then, to say that there is no necessity to choose a collection over others is no more than to say that there is no necessity to give a name to a collection over others. And to say this is simply to say that there is no intrinsic relationship between names and ideas. That is to say, this relation is arbitrary. This seems to be what Leibniz, at one point, reads in Locke's discussion of "arbitrariness." He criticizes Locke by saying that

If we are concerned only with possibilities, all these ideas are equally natural. Anyone who has seen a sheep killed has had an idea of that act in his thought, even if he has not deemed it worth his attention and has not given it a name. Why, then, should we restrict ourselves to names when our concern is with ideas themselves . . . ?<sup>5</sup>

But is this actually what Locke means when he talks of the arbitrariness of ideas of mixed modes? Apparently, the

text seems to endorse such a reading. At one point, Locke says that the names of mixed modes "stand for *Ideas* perfectly *arbitrary*" [3.4.17]. Furthermore, his discussion of mixed modes in Books II and III both contains what might be called "the doctrine of intranslatability among languages." For instance, Locke says that "*there are in every Language many particular words, which cannot be rendered by any one single words of another*" [2.22.6, see also 3.5.8]. Given such a remark, one might think that Locke utilizes this observation to demonstrate the arbitrariness of language. And this might be thought to be good evidence for the interpretation that by the "arbitrariness" of ideas of mixed modes, Locke means that of language, rather than of ideas.

However, there are at least two reasons why we cannot accept this interpretation. First, on this reading, Locke would be said to be misguided in claiming the arbitrariness of ideas of mixed modes since the arbitrariness lies only in names of them. Secondly and more importantly, this interpretation cannot account for the reason why Locke thinks it possible to distinguish the ideas of mixed modes from those of substances in terms of the former's arbitrariness. It seems obvious that the names of mixed modes and those of substances are no different in that they signify certain ideas simply by our arbitrary imposition.

Locke himself observes this point in the following passage.

*Words* by long and familiar use . . . come to excite in Men certain *Ideas*, so constantly and readily, that they are apt to suppose a natural connexion between them. But that they *signify* only Men's peculiar Ideas, and that *by a perfectly arbitrary Imposition*, is evident, in that they often fail to excite in other (even that use the same Language) the same *Ideas*, we take them to be the Sign of [3.2.8].

It is true that just before commencing the chapter on the names of mixed modes and relations, Locke writes that the names of mixed modes stand for ideas "perfectly *arbitrary*" while "those of *Substances* are not perfectly so" [3.4.17]. However, that he is talking of ideas, not of names, is clear from the remark about simple ideas. It is said that "those of simple Ideas are perfectly *taken from the existence of things*, and are not arbitrary at all."<sup>6</sup>

### 1.3 "THE IDEAS OF MIXED MODES ARE MADE BY THE UNDERSTANDING"

Locke's grouping the names of substances and those of simple ideas together on the one hand, those of mixed modes on the other in 3.4.17 might make one suspect that what he means by the arbitrariness of ideas of mixed modes has something to do with the active role which the mind plays in the formation of these ideas. It is true that Locke often emphasizes the mind's activity in the formation of ideas of mixed modes. In making these ideas, says Locke, the mind not only "chuses a certain Number," but also "gives them connexion, and makes them into one *Idea*" [3.5.4]. In addition to this, he says,

'tis the Mind, that combines several scattered independent *Ideas*, into one complex one [3.5.6];

it [the making of ideas of mixed modes] is done by the free choice of the Mind, pursuing its own ends; and . . . therefore these Species of mixed Modes, are the workmanship of the Understanding [3.5.6].

By contrast, "*those [names] of simple Ideas are perfectly taken from the existence of things, and are not arbitrary at all*" [3.4.17]. It would seem, then, that ideas of mixed modes are arbitrary in the sense that the mind is "active" in the formation of them, whereas simple ideas are not so because the mind is "passive" in perceiving them.

At least one commentator takes this to be what Locke means by "arbitrariness." In his *John Locke*, D.J. O'Connor



observes that the languages we use contain two classes of words among others.

The words in the first of these two classes reflect features of the world which are forced on our notice by its nature and construction. These are names of ideas of simple qualities like red, square, or sweet, or of substances like apple, dog, gold, or table. But there are other words which name ideas which are not forced on our notice in this way, but are rather constructed from features of the world *selected* by us to serve some special interest or purpose. The examples Locke gives are taken largely from moral, theological or legal terms and weights and measures.

This, suggests O'Connor, is what Locke means when he says names of mixed modes and relations stand for perfectly arbitrary ideas and names of other ideas do not. According to O'Connor, then, the ideas which the mind is *forced* to receive in experience are not arbitrary while the ones that the mind constructs for itself are called "arbitrary."

A similar reading is also offered by Leibniz. At one point in *New Essays on Human Understanding*, Leibniz makes the spokesman of Locke express Locke's view as follows.

But does not the mind make ideas of mixed modes by combining simple ideas as it sees fit, without needing a real model, whereas simple ideas come to it without choice, 'by real existence of things'? Does not the mind often see a mixed idea before the thing itself exists?<sup>8</sup>

However, this cannot be the correct interpretation of what Locke means by the arbitrariness of ideas of mixed modes. According to O'Connor, ideas of substances are grouped together with simple ideas because the mind is

passive in the perception of both types of ideas. Such an interpretation, however, is mistaken. Locke's position is that the mind is passive in the reception of all simple ideas while it is active in the perception of *all* other types of ideas. This point is made clear when he starts his discussion of complex ideas in 2.12.1 and is never changed. For instance, it is said that

Though the Mind be wholly passive, in respect of its simple *Ideas*. Yet, I think, we may say, it is not so, in respect of its complex *Ideas* [2.30.3].

It would seem quite strange, then, that Locke discards his position by classifying complex ideas of substances along with simple ideas as those in the perception of which the mind is passive as soon as he starts Book III.

Moreover, it is to be observed that in the very chapter on the names of mixed modes in Book III, Locke discusses the contrast between simple ideas and ideas of mixed modes in a different manner from that in which he talks of the contrast between ideas of mixed modes and those of substances. As regards the former, Locke explains the difference between the two types of ideas in terms of the passive/active distinction, and here there is no mention of the arbitrariness of ideas of mixed modes. It is only when the contrast between ideas of mixed modes and those of substances are considered that the arbitrariness of ideas of

mixed modes becomes at issue. Locke's actual words read as follows.

The first Particularity I shall observe in them is, that the abstract *Ideas*, or . . . the Essences of the several Species *of mixed Modes are made by the Understanding*, wherein they differ from those of simple *Ideas*: in which sort, the Mind has no power to make any one, but only receives such as are presented to it, by the real Existence of Things operating upon it [3.5.2];

In the next place, these *Essences of the Species of mixed Modes*, are not only *made* by the Mind, but made *very arbitrarily*, made without Patterns, or reference to any real Existence. Wherein they differ from those of Substances, which carry with them the Supposition of some real Being, from which they are taken, and to which they are conformable [3.5.3].

These passages clearly shows that Locke thinks that the arbitrariness of ideas of mixed modes concerns the distinction between them and those of substances, not the one between them and simple ideas together with those of substances.

## FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER ONE

1 Numbers cited in the text without other references are from John Locke, *An Essay concerning Human Understanding*, ed. P.H. Nidditch (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1975). References to the *Essay* are cited by book, chapter, and section number.

2 G.W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding*, ed. and trans. by P. Remnant and J. Bennett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), p.294.

3 *Essay* 2.22.2; emphasis added.

4 Leibniz, op. cit. p.301.

5 Leibniz, op. cit. p.301.

6 *Essay* 3.4.17; emphasis added.

7 D.J. O'Connor, *John Locke* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1952), p.146-147.

8 Leibniz, op. cit. p.300.

CHAPTER TWO

## LOCKE ON MIXED MODES AND IDEAS OF MIXED MODES

When Locke explains the difference between ideas of mixed modes and those of substances in the beginning of the chapter on the names of mixed modes, he seems to be thinking that the arbitrariness of ideas of mixed modes has something to do with the fact that these ideas are made without reference to any real existence. In fact, while Locke thinks that ideas of mixed modes can be distinguished from those of substances in terms of the formers' arbitrariness, it is also his position that the two types of complex ideas can be distinguished by considering the manner in which these ideas are made.

The difference in the manner of formation plays a crucial role particularly in his discussion of the reality of our ideas. In explaining the reality of ideas, Locke thinks that different standards are required for the two types of ideas. Concerning the reality of ideas of mixed modes, he says, "there is nothing more required to those kind of *Ideas*, to make them *real*, but that they be so framed, that there be a possibility of existing conformable to them" [2.30.4]. On the other hand, ideas of substances "are no farther *real*, than as they are such Combinations of simple *Ideas*, as are really united, and co-exist in Things without us" [2.30.5]. And this is because ideas of mixed modes are "not intended to be the Copies of any thing, nor

referred to the existence of any thing, as to their Originals" [4.4.5], while those of substances are "made all of them in reference to Things existing without us, and intended to be Representations of Substances, as they really are" [2.30.5]. It seems, then, that Locke thinks that the difference in the manner of formation provides the reason for his handling the reality of these ideas according to different criteria.

The problem, however, is that, in explaining the reality of ideas of mixed modes in 2.30.4, Locke says that the mutual consistency of their component ideas is sufficient for their reality because mixed modes have "no other *reality*, but what they have in the Minds of Men." This remark appears to suggest that what explains the condition for the reality of ideas of mixed modes is not the manner in which they are made, but the ontological status of mixed modes.

In this chapter, I shall argue that a careful reading of the text reveals that when he talks of mixed modes as having no reality other than what they have in the mind, this is not concerned with the ontological status of mixed modes. Instead, Locke's position is that the condition for the reality varies in accordance with how ideas are formed.

## 2.1 LOCKE ON THE ONTOLOGICAL STATUS OF MIXED MODES

At one point in the *Essay*, Locke writes of mixed modes as "having no other reality but what they have in the Minds of Men" [2.30.4], whereas in other places he seems to admit the real existence of such entities in nature. To some commentators, this appears to be a mere inconsistency on Locke's part. For instance, David L. Perry in his article "Locke on Mixed Modes, Relations, and Knowledge" writes,

There is simply a contradiction between Locke's denial of external reality of mixed modes and his admission that mixed modes have real existence.<sup>1</sup>

Now before considering whether such is actually the case, I shall first take a general look at what Locke says about mixed modes. It seems that Locke realized the necessity of a separate treatment of mixed modes in the process of his analysis of moral relations. In one of the early drafts of the *Essay*, Locke writes of "moral goodnesse & badnesse" as "nothing but the relation or conformity of the actions of men to some rule" and carries out the analysis of the idea of "murther."<sup>2</sup> Although in Draft A, he still calls them simply "actions," in Draft B, they come to be described as "moral things" and eventually, by the end of that draft, as "modes":

. . . if we have not made a right collection of those simple Ideas which make up the complex Idea signified by the specific name<sup>3</sup> of any *mode or action*, we shall also give it wrong names.

Locke's conception of mixed modes as actions can be further confirmed by his journal entry on Aug. 25 1678.

Complex modes are most if not all of our owne makeing being but names we have given to certaine motions figures or actions &c. as to move walke step slide run dance jump tumble fall lie downe, all but several actions of a man, roast, fire, bake.<sup>4</sup>

This point remains unchanged in the *Essay*. Locke still writes of mixed modes as "moral actions" [2.28.15], and remarks that the most considerable parts of mixed modes are moral beings or actions [3.5.12, 3.6.42]. Examples of mixed modes given by Locke, as Perry reports, are beauty, theft, obligation, drunkenness, a lie, hypocrisy, sacrilege, murder, appeal, triumph, wrestling, fencing, boldness, habit, testiness, running, speaking, revenge, gratitude, polygamy, justice, liberality, courage and etc. Given Locke's inclusion of an event like resurrection as a mixed mode, for him mixed modes are not only actual events or actions. Perry correctly characterizes mixed modes for Locke as "possible events, actions, activities, conditions, states, or complex properties."<sup>5</sup>

How does Locke think of the ontological status of mixed modes then? Given his conception of them as actions, we might expect that he would admit the existence or at least occurrence of them. In fact, it seems to be his position that there are such actions and events in nature. Locke



talks of the possibility of forming a complex idea of a mixed mode from an actual occurrence of a complex property in nature [2.22.2], whereas such an existing collection of properties may be left alone without being made into a mixed mode [3.5.3]. Furthermore, it is to be noted that his conception of mixed modes as actions makes him express some specifications about the existence of mixed modes. There seem to be at least two points to be recognized as regards their ontological status.

First, according to Locke, modes in general do not "subsist" by themselves. They are not only considered as "Dependences on, or Affections of Substances" [2.12.4]. They are claimed to be "ultimately terminated in Substances" [2.27.2]. This seems to be his invariable opinion since he writes already in Draft B,

Devotion Modesty, Cunning Revenge. &c which words implying commonly something without the subject wherein the simple Ideas expressed thereby are supposed to exist. stand for modes or relations . . . .

Secondly, the status of mixed modes as actions seems to make Locke think that mixed modes have only a "short existence." For instance, it is said that

. . . the greatest part of mixed modes, being Actions, which perish in their Birth, are not capable of a lasting Duration, as Substances, which are Actors; and wherein the simple Ideas that make up the complex Ideas designed by the Name, have a lasting union [3.6.42].

Moreover, the transience of mixed modes, Locke thinks, automatically settles the problem concerning the identity and diversity of such beings:

. . . as to things whose Existence is in succession, such as are the Actions of finite Beings, v.g. Motion and Thought, both which consist in a continued train of Succession, concerning their Diversity there can be no question: Because each perishing the moment it begins, they cannot exist in different times, or in different places, as permanent Beings can at different times exist in distant places; and therefore no motion or thought considered as at different times can be the same, each part thereof having a different beginning of Existence [2.27.2].

This, however, is not all Locke says about mixed modes. As Perry points out, Locke does writes of mixed modes as "having no other reality, but what they have in the Minds of Men" [2.30.4]. In other places, mixed modes are said to be "Archetypes without Patterns" [2.31.3] and have "no other sensible Standard, existing any where, but the Name it self, or the definition of that Name" [2.32.12]. And finally, Locke writes that the union of a mixed mode "has not particular foundation in Nature" [3.5.10].

How can we make sense of Locke's fluctuating attitude toward the ontological status of mixed modes? Should we say with Perry that "there is simply a contradiction between Locke's denial of the external reality of mixed modes and his admission that some mixed modes have real existence"?<sup>7</sup>

## 2.2 THE ARONSON-LEWIS INTERPRETATION

An attempt to rescue Locke from the charge of inconsistency was made by Christopher Aronson and Douglas Lewis in their discussion of Perry's article. There they argue that when Locke talks of mixed modes as having no other reality than what they have in the mind, he is saying, "there is no *real essence* in nature which unites the properties, which come to constitute mixed modes, into complexes."<sup>8</sup> and therefore that there is no such contradiction in his account of mixed modes as Perry maintains.

Their interpretation on this issue stems from their main thesis that characteristic feature of complex ideas of mixed modes are supposed by Locke to reflect the difference in ontological status between mixed modes and substances. So they begin their account by noting Locke's remark that complex ideas of mixed modes owe their unity to the mind. As they acknowledge, this aspect of the ideas of mixed modes is already pointed out by Perry. In his article, Perry quotes Locke as saying that every idea of a mixed mode "has its Unity from an Act of the Mind combining those several simple Ideas together, and considering them as one complex one, consisting of those parts . . . " [2.22.4].

While Perry confines himself to saying that a partially nonempirical origin is thus attributed to ideas of mixed

modes" since "the unity essential to such ideas" is "made,"<sup>9</sup> Aronson and Lewis argue that this represents a distinctive character of mixed modes at the ontological level. The mind-dependence of the unity of ideas of mixed modes, they think, indicates that collections of properties which come to constitute mixed modes do not have a unity in themselves.

The question, however, is how the mind-dependence of the unity of *ideas* of mixed modes can be said to indicate the mind-dependence of the unity of mixed modes. Aronson and Lewis attempt to show this from the consideration of the source of the unity in the case of ideas of substances. According to them, it is Locke's position that our ideas of substances derive their unity from unified combinations of properties given in nature. In order to support this claim, they quote the following passage:

But in the forming his Idea of this new Substance he takes the quite contrary Course; here he has a Standard made by Nature . . . he puts in no simple Idea into his complex one, but what he has the Perception of from the thing it self. He takes Care that his Idea be conformable to this Archetype, and intends the Name should stand for an Idea so conformable [3.6.46].

This passage does seem to show that our ideas of substances are made by "copying" combinations of properties or qualities given in nature. However, despite their belief, it is not so clear whether Locke thinks ideas of substances get their unity from combinations of qualities occurring in

nature. For Locke elsewhere admits that ideas of mixed modes may also be sometimes made from "Experience and Observation of things themselves" [2.22.9], but he thinks they owe their unity to the mind. So it might be argued that ideas being copied from such combinations do not necessarily imply that they get their unity from them.

Aronson and Lewis are well aware of this point and thus try to show that combinations of properties which constitute substances, unlike those which constitute mixed modes, do have a unity of their own, that is to say, they are unified combinations. They argue that Locke is alluding to such a "natural" unity of combinations of properties constituting substances when he writes:

. . . all the Ideas we have of particular distinct sorts of Substances, are nothing but several Combinations of simple Ideas, [the properties, of which these simple ideas are ideas] co-existing in such, though unknown, Cause of their Union, as makes the whole subsist of itself.<sup>10</sup>

And they further argue that such combinations of properties as those which constitute substances have their own unity because of the existence of real essence which is responsible for a unity in each of these combinations of properties.

Aronson and Lewis thus maintain that when a combination of properties exists in nature with its own unity as in the case of those constituting substances, the mind makes a

complex idea simply by copying such a unified combination given in nature and hence that the source of the unity in the case of ideas of substances is not the mind, but rather a real essence which makes a unity of that combination of properties. It seems to be the case, then, that if a collection of ideas owes its unity to the mind as in the case of ideas of mixed modes, this is because there is no *unified* combination of properties in nature from which the unity of a complex idea can be derived.

What follows from this, it is to be noted, is not, as Perry contends, that there is no occurrence of a combination of properties which comes to constitute a mixed mode, but that there is no occurrence of such a combination *qua* a unified one. And what explains the lack of a unity in the combination is the non-existence of real essence in mixed modes, and this is what Locke means by his remark about mixed modes having no reality in nature. Hence, there is no inconsistency between his denial of the external reality of mixed modes and his admitting the real essence of them.

### 2.3 "IDEAS OF MIXED MODES BEING MADE WITHOUT REFERENCE"

While it seems to rescue Locke from the alleged inconsistency in his account of mixed modes, there are some problems in the Aronson-Lewis interpretation. As we have seen, they attempt to solve the apparent contradiction in Locke's conception of the ontological status of mixed modes by arguing that when he talks of mixed modes as having no reality in nature, he means that there is no real essence in them. Against their reading, however, R.S. Woolhouse argues<sup>11</sup> that for Locke modes in general do have real essences, and that he does think a modal real essence, just as in the case of a substantial one, is "that, on which all the properties of the Species depend, and from which they all flow" [3.5.4, see also 3.3.18, 2.31.6, 2.32.24]. Given such textual evidence, it is rather questionable whether we can legitimately conclude that Locke's remark about mixed modes having no reality in nature suggests his denial of modal real essences.

Secondly, Aronson and Lewis maintain that ideas of mixed modes owe their unity to the mind *because* there is no unified combination of properties in nature which the mind copies in forming these ideas. Their reason for this claim is that in the case of our ideas of substances, a collection of ideas which constitute such a complex idea "have a unity due to the fact that the complex idea is copied from the

unified combination of properties given in nature."<sup>12</sup> And this is a part of their interpretation that "the features of ideas of mixed modes . . . are the basis for Locke's attempt to account for the difference in *ontological status* between mixed modes . . . on the one hand and substances . . . on the other."<sup>13</sup>

This line of thought, however, is mistaken. In order to conclude the mind-dependence of the unity of mixed modes from that of the unity of the *ideas* of mixed modes, another thesis about the condition of the formation of ideas must be assumed. In the case of our ideas of substances, they argue, such complex ideas derive their unity from unified combinations of properties occurring in nature. It must be recognized, however, that this interpretation hinges on the fact that the ideas of substances are made with the intention of copying unified combinations in nature. By the same token, then, when the absence of unified combinations of properties in nature is said to explain why the ideas of mixed modes owe their unity to the mind, it is tacitly assumed that these ideas are also made by the mind with the intention of copying such combinations of properties.

Yet such an assumption is precisely the contrary of Locke's actual position. Concerning the ideas of mixed modes, he invariably insists that these ideas are made without reference to anything and have no intention in them



to copy anything. There are plenty of remarks by Locke along this line. For instance, it is said that our complex ideas of modes are "voluntary Collections of simple Ideas, which the Mind puts together, without reference to any real Archetypes, or standing Patterns, existing any where" and that they are not "intended for Copies of Things really existing, but for Archetypes, or standing Patterns, existing any where" and that they are not "intended for Copies of Things really existing, but for Archetypes made by the Mind, to rank and denominate Things by" [2.31.3].

What we must recognize here, I suggest, is that since the ideas of mixed modes are made without being referred to anything, the unity of such ideas depends upon the mind whether or not there is a unified combination of properties in nature. To put it differently, what accounts for the mind-dependence of the unity in these ideas is the fact that these ideas are formed without reference to anything, not that there is no unified combination of properties which come to constitute a mixed mode. Needless to say, this is not to say that for Locke each of the combinations of properties which come to constitute mixed modes does have a unity of its own. What I am arguing is merely that the mind-dependence of their unity has no implication whatsoever for whether the combinations of properties constituting mixed modes occur as unified complexes. As soon as it is

assumed that the features of ideas of mixed modes must reflect those of mixed modes, we lose sight of a crucial character of ideas of mixed modes.

#### 2.4 "MIXED MODES HAVING NO OTHER REALITY . . . "

The alleged inconsistency in Locke's conception of the ontological status of mixed modes hinges mainly on his problematic remark that "mixed modes . . . having no other reality, but what they have in the Minds of Men" [2.30.4]. In last section, we have examined an attempt to rescue Locke from this charge, and we have seen that it does not do the job. The reason for this inability, I have suggested, is due to its failure to recognize a distinctive feature of ideas of mixed modes; these ideas are made without being referred to anything.

It has been reported by various commentators that as regards the reality of ideas, Locke treats the two types of complex ideas (i.e. those of mixed modes and those of substances) differently. According to Locke, a complex idea is real if its constituent ideas are mutually compatible whereas in order for a complex idea of a substance to be real, it is necessary for there to be some actual thing which is conformable to it. Given that the ones are no different from the others in their being complex ideas, the question is why Locke thinks that such different requirements are called for.

We should recognize that it is for this very reason that Locke makes the remark about mixed modes having no other reality than what they have in the mind. When the

passage is quoted in full, it is clear that his intention with that remark is to explain why the reality of ideas of mixed modes is determined in terms of consistency:

*Mixed Modes and Relations*, having no other *reality*, but what they have in the Minds of Men, there is nothing more required to those kind of *Ideas*, to make them *real*, but that they be so framed, that there be a possibility of existing conformable to them [2.30.4].

On the other hand, Locke writes of the reality of ideas of substances as follows:

Our *complex Ideas of Substances*, being made all of them in reference to Things existing without us, and intended to be Representations of Substances, as they really are, are no farther *real*, than as they are such Combinations of simple *Ideas*, as are really united, and co-exist in Things without us [2.30.5].

A comparison of the two passages would make us see at least two points. First, it shows that Locke does think that concerning their reality, the two types of complex ideas are treated differently. Ideas of mixed modes are real if "they be so framed, that there be a possibility of existing conformable to them," whereas ideas of substances are not real unless "they are such Combinations of simple Ideas, as are really united, and co-exist in Things without us." Secondly, in the above passages, Locke is surely offering the explanation for his treating the two types of complex ideas differently as to their reality. The reality of ideas of mixed modes is determined by one criterion *because* mixed

modes have "no other reality, but what they have in the Minds of Men," while the reality of ideas of substances is judged by another criterion *because* they are "made all of them in reference to Things existing without us, and intended to be Representations of Substances, as they really are."

Note that in the case of ideas of substances, the reason for such a treatment is attributed to the manner in which these *ideas* are made whereas in the case of ideas of mixed modes, the ontological status of mixed modes is said to provide the reason. This would seem quite strange given what Locke is trying to do there. But this is not the case. The truth of the matter, I suggest, is that when Locke talks of mixed modes as having no other reality than what they have in the mind, he means that *ideas* of mixed modes are made without being referred to anything. And it is this difference in the condition of the formation of ideas that is supposed by Locke to account for the necessity of different requirements in determining the reality of ideas. Locke's position is that the requirement for the reality of ideas varies in accordance with whether or not an idea is made with the intention of copying something.

That he is talking about the *ideas* of mixed modes, not about mixed modes is obvious even in that very remark. For Locke writes, "Mixed modes . . . having no other reality . .

. , there is nothing more required to *those kind of Ideas*, to make *them* real, but that *they* be so framed, that there be a possibility conformable to *them*."<sup>14</sup> Moreover, it is to be noted that the difference in the condition of the formation between the two types of complex ideas plays a crucial role in his discussion of the adequacy and inadequacy of ideas. It is because, says Locke, complex ideas of mixed modes are "voluntary Collection of simple *Ideas*, which the Mind puts together, without reference to any real Archetypes or standing Patterns, existing any where" that they "cannot but be *adequate Ideas*" [2.31.3].

But in our *Ideas of Substances*, it is otherwise. For there desiring to copy Things, as they really do exist; and to represent to our selves that Constitution, on which all their Properties depend, we perceive our *Ideas* attain not that Perfection we intend . . . and so are all *inadequate* [2.31.3].

Aside from how the condition of the formation of ideas is supposed to explain the adequacy and inadequacy of these ideas, it seems certain that *Locke believes* that it can be explained in reference to how an idea is made.

A more direct support to my reading can be found in Locke's account of the reality of knowledge in Book IV. There he says that our knowledge concerning modes in general attains reality because all our complex ideas except those of substances are "not intended to be the Copies of any thing, nor referred to the existence of any thing, as to

their Originals" [4.4.5]. On the other hand, "to have *Ideas of Substances*, which, by being conformable to Things, may afford us real Knowledge, it is not enough, as in Modes, to put together such *Ideas* as have no inconsistency," since these ideas are "supposed Copies, and referred to *Archetypes* without us" [4.4.12].

It would seem most natural to assume, then, that when Locke talks of mixed modes as having no other reality than what they have in the mind, he is trying to explain why the reality of ideas of mixed modes is determined in terms of consistency. And by that remark, he means that *ideas of mixed modes* are made with no intention of copying anything.

It would further follow from this that there is no such inconsistency between that remark and his admitting the real existence of mixed modes as Perry maintains. The ideas of mixed modes being made without reference to anything has no bearing on the occurrence of mixed modes in nature. Locke's frequent claim that ideas of mixed modes have no "patterns," "standard," "original" and so on can be understood in the same manner. By this Locke simply means that in the formation of ideas of mixed modes, there is no particular objects to which these ideas are referred by the mind.

## FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER TWO

1 David L. Perry, "Locke on Mixed Modes, Relations and Knowledge," in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 5 (1967), p.225.

2 John Locke, *Drafts for the Essay concerning Human Understanding, and Other Philosophical Writings*, vol.1 *Drafts A and B*, ed. P.H. Nidditch and G.A.J. Rogers (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1990), p.12. (Henceforth "Draft A" or "Draft B").

3 *Draft B*, p.266; emphasis added.

4 John Locke, *An Early Draft of Locke's Essay together with excerpts from his journals*, ed. R.I. Aaron and J. Gibb (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936), p.112.

5 Perry, op. cit., p.220.

6 *Draft B*, p.216.

7 Perry, op. cit., p.225.

8 C. Aronson and D. Lewis, "Locke on Mixed Modes, Knowledge and Substances," in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 8 (1970), p.195. Emphasis added.

9 Perry, op. cit., p.221.

10 *Essay* 2.23.6; insertion by Aronson and Lewis.

11 R.S. Woolhouse, "Locke on Modes, Substances and Knowledge," in the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*, 10 (1972).

12 Aronson and Lewis, op. cit., p.195.

13 Aronson and Lewis, op. cit., p.193.

14 *Essay* 2.30.4; emphasis added.



### CHAPTER THREE

#### LOCKE ON THE FORMATION OF COMPLEX IDEAS

##### 3.1 "REFERRING" AN IDEA TO REAL EXISTENCE

The consideration of Locke's view on ideas of mixed modes in the last two chapters seems to suggest that he takes it to be a defining feature of ideas of mixed modes that they are made without reference to anything while he considers it to be a distinctive character of those of substances that they are all made in reference to things existing without us. It is not improbable, then, that Locke thinks such features of these complex ideas to be related to the fact that ideas of mixed modes are arbitrary while those of substances are not arbitrary.

The question, however, is how one set of features of complex ideas (arbitrariness/non-arbitrariness) can be explained in terms of the other (non-referentially made/referentially made). To answer this, it would be sufficient to account for the relationship of the two features in one case since the two types of complex ideas are said to be distinguishable in terms of either feature. Thus, in the following, I shall attempt to show how the non-arbitrariness of complex ideas of substances is supposed to be explained in terms of their being made in reference to real existence. But, first of all, we must get clear about what Locke means when he says that complex ideas of substances are made *in reference to* "Things existing without us."

Locke's account of "referring" can be found in the chapter on true and false ideas in Book II. There he explains that truth and falsity, properly speaking, belong only to propositions, and therefore that "our *Ideas*, being nothing but bare Appearances or Perceptions in our Mind, cannot properly and simply in themselves be said to be true or false" [2.32.1]. However, ideas can be called true or false, says Locke, if the mind *refers* any of its ideas to anything extraneous to them.

Because the Mind in such a reference, makes a tacit Supposition of their Conformity to that Thing: which Supposition, as it happens to be *true* or *false*, so the *Ideas* themselves come to be denominated [2.32.4].

It would seem, then, that to refer an idea to, say, X, according to Locke, is to make a supposition that the idea is *conformable* to X. And insofar as such a supposition happens to be true or false, the idea itself can be said to be true or false. It is important to recognize here that to refer an idea to X *is* to suppose that it is conformable to X. If to refer an idea to X were merely to juxtapose the idea and X, Locke would not write, "when-ever the Mind refers any of its Ideas to any thing extraneous to them, they are then capable to be called *true* or *false*."<sup>1</sup> So for him, to refer an idea to existing things is to suppose that there is some thing in nature that the idea is conformable to.

But exactly what is it to suppose the "conformity" between an idea and a real existence? As is often observed, Locke thinks that the relation of conformity holds or is supposed to hold between an idea and various types of objects. The conformity relation might be supposed between an idea and (a) the idea "in *other Men's* Mind called by the same common Name," (b) "*some real Existence*," or (c) "that *real* Constitution, and *Essence* of any thing, whereon all its Properties depend" [2.32.5]. Given such various types of objects to which an idea is supposed to be conformable, one might wonder whether the meaning of the conformity relation is univocal with respect to all these objects. For the mind to suppose the conformity in the first case, for example, is said to amount to judging any of its ideas to be "the same" with those in other men's minds. Obviously, such a reading of "conformity" is not applicable to the other two cases.

Furthermore, it is to be recognized that even with respect to the same type of objects, the meaning of "conformity" is different according to whether the idea in question is a simple one or a complex one. This is crucial especially when the supposed conformity is with a real existence. Our simple ideas, says Locke, all agree to the reality of things because they are "nothing but the effects of certain Powers in Things, fitted and ordained by God, to produce such Sensations in us" [2.31.2]. It would seem,

then, that "conformity" in this case, as John Yolton explains,

does not only mean 'image', since it is only the ideas of primary qualities which exactly copy or image their qualities. All simple ideas agree with the reality of things in the sense of being caused by things. Causal correspondence constitutes agreement to some real existence.<sup>2</sup>

The conformity in the case of complex ideas, however, does not seem to be explained simply as the causal correspondence between ideas and powers or qualities in things considering the fact that Locke thinks complex ideas of substances sometimes fail in conformity with the objects they are referred to. For given that a complex idea consists of a collection of simple ideas and that no simple idea fails to be conformable to the reality of things, no complex idea should be liable to such a failure if "conformity" were understood in the same sense as that in which the conformity of simple ideas is understood.

Concerning Locke's use of the term "conformity," Jonathan Bennett claims in his *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes* that Locke holds the so-called "veil-of-perception doctrine" which sets "the entire range of facts about sensory states over against the entire range of facts about the objective realm."<sup>3</sup> This interpretation is usually thought to get textual support from Locke's apparently sceptical remarks such as this.

'Tis evident, the Mind knows not Things immediately, but only by the intervention of the *Ideas* it has of them. *Our Knowledge* therefore is *real*, only so far as there is a conformity between our *Ideas* and the reality of Things. But what shall be here the Criterion? How shall the Mind, when it perceives nothing but its own *Ideas*, know that they agree with Things themselves? [4.4.3].

As far as the "conformity" relation is concerned, however, it is rather questionable that Locke is thinking along the line of Bennett's interpretation. As regards the conformity of complex ideas of substances, Locke explains that there are two types of "archetypes" to which the mind refers these ideas.

1. Sometimes they are referred to a supposed real Essence of each Species of Things. 2. Sometimes they are only design'd to be Pictures and Representations in the Mind, of Things that do exist, by *Ideas* of those qualities that are discoverable in them [2.31.6].

Now our task here is to clarify what Locke means when he says that ideas of substances are "made all of them in reference to *Things existing without us*," and thus the conformity at issue is the one with the second type of archetype.

What we should notice here, then, is that in its referring a complex idea to existing things, the mind intends the idea to be the idea of "discoverable" qualities in them. Moreover, in such a reference to "the existence of Things" or "Combinations of simple Ideas existing together in Things," Locke explains, an idea can be called false,

*When* they put together simple *Ideas*, which in the real Existence of Things, have no union [2.32.18].

I take his point to be that complex ideas of substances in reference to real existence are false if the qualities represented by their component ideas do not have union in nature. In addition, Locke writes in the same chapter that "the two *Ideas*, of a Man, and a Centaur, supposed to be the *Ideas* of real Substances, are the one *true*, and the other *false*, the one having a Conformity to what has really existed; the other not" [2.32.5]. It would seem, then, what constitutes the conformity between a complex idea and an object is the fact that a set of qualities represented by a set of simple ideas which constitute that complex idea *all* belong to that object or coexist in it. And he thinks we *can* know this simply by observing actual things. In other words, he considers the conformity between our ideas and reality not as that between the sensory and things as they are in themselves, but rather as that between our ideas and things as they appear to us.

This interpretation is given textual support by the following remark by Locke himself.

. . . our *Ideas* of Substances, which consisting of a Collection of simple *Ideas*, supposed taken from the Works of Nature, may yet vary from them, by having more or different *Ideas* united in them, than are to be found in the things themselves: From whence it comes to pass, that they may, and often do fail of being conformable to Things themselves [4.4.11].

Locke's position is that ideas of substances in reference to actual things fail in the conformity with them when they include a collection of qualities which is "different" from the ones found in our experience of them. In other words, he understands the conformity of these ideas with actual things in terms of the correspondence between a set of qualities represented by their component ideas and a set of qualities observably co-instantiated in them.<sup>4</sup>

It would seem most likely, then, that, for Locke, to suppose the conformity between a complex idea and a real existence is to suppose that there is a thing in nature in which a group of qualities represented by its component ideas coexist. Moreover, since to refer an idea to real existence is to suppose its conformity to existing things, to refer an idea to "Things existing without us" amounts also to supposing the coexistence or union of a group of qualities represented by its constituent ideas in nature.

### 3.2 THE FORMATION OF COMPLEX IDEAS

The next question, then, is what it is to say that a complex idea is *made* in reference to "Things existing without us." I have suggested that for Locke, to "refer" a complex idea to some real existence is to suppose the union of the qualities represented by its component ideas in nature. Assuming that such a reading correctly captures Locke's actual position, it would seem that to say that an idea is *made* in reference to a real existence is to say that it is made with the supposition of the coexistence of a collection of qualities in nature. Now if we are to decide whether Locke in fact holds such a view, we should take a close look at his account of the formation of complex ideas of *substances*. For according to Locke, the mind's referring ideas to some object is concerned only with the formation of the complex ideas of substances. And thus, this is the place where Locke's view on this issue should be found.

But before considering his account of the formation of ideas of substances, I would like to outline his view on complex ideas in general.

Unfortunately, Locke does not say much about the nature of complex ideas or wherein the complexity of such ideas consists. Nevertheless, it is not difficult to see his conception of "complex idea." As regards the nature of simple ideas, Locke writes that each one of them is "uncompounded, contains in it nothing but *one uniform*



*Appearance*, or Conception in the mind, and is not distinguishable into different *Ideas*" [2.2.1]. We might infer from this that for Locke, the complexity of a complex idea is characterized by the *compoundedness* or *compositeness* of its content and a complex idea is distinguishable into component ideas. Such seems, roughly, to be Locke's conception of complex ideas as it corresponds to his short definition in 2.12.1.

*Ideas* . . . made up of several simple ones put together, I call *Complex* . . . .

The composite character of complex ideas can be further confirmed by his explanation of the formation of complex ideas. According to Locke, the formation of complex ideas, as well as that of ideas of relations and of general ideas, depends upon "the Acts of the Mind wherein it exerts its Power over its simple *Ideas*" [2,12,1]. Particularly, the operation of the mind concerned with the making of complex ideas is called "composition," by which the mind "puts together several of those simple ones [ideas] it has received from Sensation and Reflection, and combines them into complex ones" [2.11.6]. And when the ideas put together are of the same kind, this way of composition is called "enlarging" [2.11.6]. It appears to be Locke's official position that all complex ideas (i.e. those of simple modes, of mixed modes and of substances) are formed in the manner

of composition. "Combining several simple *Ideas* into one compound one," writes Locke, "and thus all Complex *Ideas* are made" [2.12.1].<sup>5</sup> It would seem, then, that in order for an idea to be a complex one, a plurality of *content* is necessary.

The question, however, is whether the plurality of content alone is sufficient for an idea to be a complex idea. The answer to this question has some crucial implications. For if the plurality of content is a sufficient condition, it would follow that simple ideas which are observed in combination in experience may be regarded as a complex idea because of their multiplicity. It would seem, then, that for Locke, complex ideas are at least sometimes given to the mind in experience. Many eminent commentators agree. Here are some examples of such an interpretation.

Frequently in the *Essay* complex ideas, as well as simple, are held to be *given*<sup>6</sup>;

. . . many passages in Locke approximate to the modern view and agree that what is given in sensation is often (or indeed always in the case of sight) a complex idea<sup>7</sup>;

. . . there are complex ideas in the mind .<sup>8</sup>. . . which are distinct from those made by the mind . . .<sup>8</sup>;

. . . some complex ideas just occur and are not 'made by the mind'<sup>9</sup>;

Locke does not mean . . . that ideas are necessarily received *in their simplicity*; complexes can be got directly from experience, and do not always actually have to be built up from experienced simples.<sup>10</sup>

Such an interpretation, however, is mistaken. We must recognize that for Locke a complex idea is not merely an aggregate of distinct simple ideas. This point has recently been noted by one commentator. In his paper "Locke on the Making of Complex Ideas," Michael Losonsky writes,

A complex idea . . . according to Locke, is not just an aggregate of simple ideas . . . . When a combination or collection is made into a complex idea something new is added to the collection. Locke makes this quite clear in a passage where he state that the mind in making a complex idea first takes a number of ideas and then "gives them connexion, and makes them into one Idea" (3.5.4). In other words, the collection of ideas must be connected together in certain ways (unfortunately not spelled-out by Locke) and turned into one single idea.<sup>11</sup>

Losonsky's interpretation is that for Locke, the simple ideas that the mind observes in combination are not a complex idea, since such a collection of simple ideas has not been given any connexion and therefore is nothing more than an aggregate of distinct simple ideas. In other words, Locke does not take it to be a sufficient condition for the making of a complex idea that a certain number of simple ideas simply be bundled together.

Now while Losonsky's reading seems to capture Locke's actual position on this issue, there is a slight ambiguity. When it is said that in order to form a complex idea, "the collection of ideas must be connected together in certain ways" or "something new is added to the collection," Losonsky's point appears to be that the collection of ideas

cannot be equated with a complex idea *because they are devoid of any connexion*. This, however, should not be understood as suggesting that what distinguishes a complex idea from a collection of ideas, on Locke's theory, is the existence of connexion or relation in the former. For if this is the case, it might, for instance, be argued that simple ideas found in combination are a complex idea, since they have some foundation in nature and are therefore related in some way whether or not the mind "gives" them connexion.

What, then, does Locke mean by saying that in the making of complex ideas, the mind gives connexion to a certain number of simple ideas and makes them into one idea? It is true that Locke, as Losonsky points out, does not spell out in what manner the collection of simple ideas is connected together. Yet he at least explains that the collection of ideas is united by the mind's power to consider them as one single idea.

As simple *Ideas* are observed to exist in several Combinations united together; so the Mind has a power to consider several of them united together, as one *Idea*; and that not only as they are united in external Objects, but as it self has join'd them. *Ideas* thus made up of several simple ones put together, I call *Complex* . . . [2.12.1].

A collection of ideas found to coexist is not to be equated with a complex idea not because those ideas are not connected in any way, but rather because they have not been

*considered* to be one single idea. In other words, the difference between a complex idea and a mere aggregate of simple ideas requires the recognition of a unity. This point has already been noticed by James Gibson.

while . . . experience may supply us directly with the plurality of contents contained in a complex idea, and thus furnish a clue to its formation, it is important to notice that the mere presentation together of a number of elements is not sufficient to constitute them a single complex idea. For the complex idea involves the recognition of a unity which does not belong to the plurality of simple ideas as such. In order that these may constitute a single complex idea, it is necessary that the mind should exercise its 'power to consider several of them united together as one idea.'<sup>12</sup>

It would follow that Locke's frequent remarks about a collection of simple ideas being found to coexist do not justify the claim that for Locke complex ideas are sometimes given to the mind in experience, since such a collection is not one complex idea, but merely an aggregate of distinct ideas. In order to make a complex idea, the mind not only collects a certain number of ideas, but also combines them into one single complex idea by executing its power to consider them as one idea. Locke thus writes that in the mind's operation of composition, it "puts together several simple ones it has received from Sensation and Reflection, *and* combines them into complex ones."<sup>13</sup>

### 3.3 THE PROPOSITIONAL NATURE OF THE FORMATION OF COMPLEX IDEAS OF SUBSTANCES

As we have seen, it appears to be Locke's position that for the making of complex ideas, it is necessary that the mind consider several simple ideas as one idea. And such recognition of a unity is the requirement for the formation of complex ideas *in general*.

However, it is also to be noticed that there is a difference between the ideas of substances and other types of complex ideas as regards the manner of this mental operation of "consideration." In the above quoted passage, Locke says that the mind has a power to consider a group of simple ideas "not only as they are united in external Objects, but as it self has join'd them" [2.12.1]. I take his position to be that while the considering of a group of simple ideas *as united in some object* constitutes the formation of the ideas of substances, the consideration of them *as one idea* constitutes the making of other types of complex ideas including those of mixed modes. Concerning the complex ideas of substances, Locke writes that they are "nothing else but a Collection of a certain number of simple Ideas, considered *as united in one thing*."<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, he writes of an idea of a mixed mode that "it has its Unity from an Act of the Mind combining those several simple Ideas together, and considering them *as one complex one*, consisting of those parts."<sup>15</sup>

The question, then, is what makes the formation of ideas of substances different from that of other complex ideas. I think the difference is that the formation of the former is *propositional* whereas that of the latter is not. According to Locke, in the making of ideas of substances, the mind considers a collection of *simple ideas* as united in one thing. But what he really means by this is that in the formation of these ideas, the mind considers a group of *qualities* represented by those simple ideas to be united in one thing as he explains earlier in the *Essay*,

. . . which *Ideas*, if I speak of sometimes, as in the things themselves, I would be understood to mean those Qualities in the Objects which produce them in us [2.8.8].

Furthermore, although Locke uses the phrase "to consider" for this mental operation, he seems to understand it to involve judgment. At the outset of the chapter on our complex ideas of substances, Locke says that the mind, observing "a certain number of simple *Ideas* go constantly together," *presumes* them to belong to one thing [2.23.1]. Presuming, for him, is judgmental as he says that "judgment is the presuming things to be so without perceiving it."<sup>16</sup>

This is not to be dismissed as a casual remark. For in one of the earliest drafts of the *Essay*, Locke explicitly admits that the formation of complex ideas of substances is propositional:

. . . the first affirmations of our minde is in collecting many simple Ideas for the making one Idea of some sensible material or as we call it substantiall objects . . . .<sup>17</sup>

Here Locke makes it quite clear that the mental operation of "affirming" is exercized in the formation of the ideas of "substantiall objects." What is not so clear, though, is exactly what the mind affirms in the making of these ideas. Concerning this, Locke explains that such affirmations are "about materiall objects," and that this is tantamount to supposing that "where there are some of these simple Ideas [i.e. the qualities represented by them] there there are others."<sup>18</sup> In another draft of the *Essay*, this is said to be "an affirmation of their union or coexistence one with an other."<sup>19</sup>

There seems to be, then, good reason to believe that Locke thinks that the mind, in framing complex ideas of substances, supposes the coexistence of a collection of qualities in one thing and that he considers this process to be propositional in nature. I have suggested that given Locke's understanding of "referring," to say that an idea is made in reference to real existence amounts to saying that it is made with the supposition of the coexistence of a group of qualities in nature. And since Locke's position is that only complex ideas of substances are made in reference to real existence, his actual position must be sought in his account of the formation of ideas of substances. Now through



the consideration of Locke's account, we seem to be able to conclude that he does hold the view that in the formation of complex ideas of substances, the mind makes a supposition that there is a thing in nature to which a certain set of qualities belong. And it follows that when he says the ideas of substances are all made in reference to things existing without us, his point is that in the formation of these ideas, the mind makes a supposition of the coexistence of a group of qualities in nature.

Before explaining the relation between such a feature of ideas of substances and the non-arbitrariness of them, however, there remain a few questions to be answered. The first question is concerned with the significance of Locke's remarks in the drafts. As we have seen, at the time of the drafts, Locke was quite explicit about the propositional character of the formation of ideas of substances. By contrast, in the *Essay*, he no longer makes such an explicit statement although he does still seem to be of this opinion. At one point, he even claims that both the mind's considering a collection of qualities as united in one thing in the formation of ideas of substances and its uniting several simple ideas into one idea in the making of collective ideas of substances are done by "the same faculty."

These collective *Ideas* of Substances, the Mind makes by its power of Composition, and uniting severally either simple or complex *Ideas* into one, as it does, by the same Faculty make the complex *Ideas* of particular Substances, consisting of an

aggregate of divers simple *Ideas*, united in one Substance [2.24.2].

Now despite all this textual evidence, could we still conclude that it is Locke's invariable opinion that the formation of ideas of substances is propositional in nature?

Secondly, if Locke does in fact think that the formation of these ideas is propositional, one might wonder whether he thinks that to make such a proposition or supposition *is* to make a complex idea of a substance. For if such were the case, it would follow that this idea itself, not just the formation of it, is propositional. This, however, does not seem to be compatible with Locke's theory of "idea" according to which ideas in themselves do not involve truth and falsity. For instance, he says that "our *Ideas*, being nothing but bare Appearances or Perceptions in our Minds, cannot properly and simply in themselves be said to be *true* or *false*" [2.32.1]. So for Locke to be consistent, it is necessary that ideas of substances be distinct from the supposition or proposition the mind makes in the formation of these ideas. But why, then, does Locke claim in the *Essay* that the mind makes ideas of substances by considering a group of simple ideas as "they are united in external Objects" [2.12.1]? Of course, if Locke did not take this mental operation of "considering" to be propositional, there would be no need to account for this. Yet since it is my contention that Locke does consider this operation as propositional, this question must be answered.

## FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER THREE

1 *Essay* 2.32.4; emphasis added.

2 John W. Yolton, *Locke and the Compass of Human Understanding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p.107.

3 Jonathan Bennett, *Locke, Berkeley, Hume: Central Themes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971), p.69.

4 In other places, especially in Book IV chapter 11, Locke does seem to have something like the veil-of-perception problem in mind.

5 Locke sometimes talks of a certain type of ideas of simple modes as the "modification" or the "variation" of the same simple idea, not as the "combination" of it.

6 R.I. Aaron, *John Locke* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 3rd ed., 1971), p.112.

7 J.D. Mabbott, *John Locke* (London: Macmillan, 1973), p.20.

8 Peter Alexander, *Ideas, Qualities and Corpuscles: Locke and Boyle on the External World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p.109.

9 Alexander, op. cit., p.112.

10 R.S. Woolhouse, *The Empiricists* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), p.80.

11 Michael Losonsky, "Locke on the Making of Complex Ideas," in *Locke Newsletter*, 20 (1989), p.40.

12 James Gibson, *Locke's Theory of Knowledge and its Historical Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917), p.62.

13 *Essay* 2.11.6; emphasis added.

14 *Essay* 2.23.14; emphasis added.

15 *Essay* 2.22.4; emphasis added.

16 *Essay* 4.14.4; the title of the section.

17 *Draft A*, p.6.

18 *Draft A*, p.4.

19 *Draft B*, p.167.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### LOCKE ON THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN IDEAS AND PROPOSITIONS

#### 4.1 LOCKE'S CONCEPTION OF PROPOSITIONS

Locke's frequent remarks about "simple apprehension" in early drafts of the *Essay* seem to reveal that the doctrine which was uppermost in his mind at the time was the compositionality of existing logic and epistemology. A typical logic book at the time of Locke, as M.A. Stewart reports,<sup>1</sup> starts from the study of terms, progresses to the combination of terms in propositions, and ends by studying the combination of propositions in arguments. And this is associated with a progression through three acts of mind. The act of mind which corresponds to a term is a simple apprehension. Judgment or mental affirmation corresponds in thinking to the ordering or combination of terms in propositions. Propositions can in turn be combined in arguments and the aspect of thinking which corresponds to this is ratiocination or reasoning.

According to the compositionality of the traditional logic, then, propositions are distinguished from simple apprehensions in two different ways. First, being considered purely from the formal viewpoint, they are different from simple terms in their compositional nature. Secondly, propositions differ from simple apprehensions because to make propositions is to make judgments if they are considered with respect to thoughts.

Such a compositionism was prevalent among new thinkers of the period. For instance, Gassendi divides his *Institution of Logic* into four parts; simple apprehension; the proposition; the syllogism; method. Of the distinction between the first two, he explains that in the proposition,

we do not simply imagine some thing and look upon it unclothed, as it were, but from some judgment concerning it by making either an affirmation or a denial. This takes place when the mind, applying itself to the various ideas it has, by a process of affirmation joins together those which agree with one another, and by negating separates those which do not agree. In<sub>2</sub> this fashion it creates a composite idea from simple ones.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the difference in the notion of "simple apprehensions" or "ideas,"<sup>3</sup> the distinction between simple apprehensions and propositions in the same manner is also found in the Port-Royal *Logic*. Of the progression from ideas to propositions, Arnauld writes that

Once we have formed ideas of things, we compare the ideas. We unite those which belong together by affirming one idea of another; we separate those which do not belong together by denying one idea of another. . . .

. . . The result of this activity of the mind is a proposition expressed by a sentence in which the verb 'is' either alone or with a negative particle connects the terms that express the ideas that are affirmed or denied.<sup>4</sup>

Here propositions are also conceived to be the result of compounding mental atoms and to be making a judgment with respect to thoughts.

Just as the traditional theory and his contemporaries consider propositions in two associated ways (i.e. with

respect to signs and with respect to thoughts), Locke's conception also captures two different aspects of propositions. On the one hand, a proposition is defined simply as the "joining" or "separating" of signs. And since for Locke there are two types of signs (i.e. ideas and words), the mind is said to be capable of making two sorts of propositions; mental and verbal. In the former, "the *Ideas* in our Understanding *are* without the use of Words *put together, or separated* by the Mind" [4.5.5]. The latter are "Words the signs of our Ideas *put together or separated in affirmative or negative Sentences*" [4.5.5]. However, a proposition, for Locke, is not merely the joining or separation of signs. In a proposition, the mind makes a judgment, affirmation or negation. This is why he says, "Truth properly belongs only to Propositions" [4.5.2]. According to Locke, truth or falsehood lies "always in some Affirmation or Negation" [2.32.3].

It should be recognized here that on Locke's theory, to form a proposition *is* to make an affirmation or negation. To put it differently, for him, to make an affirmation or negation is not something *besides* the proposition. Locke, unlike Descartes, does not distinguish a propositional attitude from a propositional content.<sup>5</sup> This is why Locke, in his discussion of judgment, identifies, albeit mistakenly, assent or dissent to a certain proposition with

judgment (i.e. affirmation or negation) about things. According to him, one and the same faculty of the mind is called "judgment" or "assent/dissent" depending on whether it is exercised immediately about things or about propositions [4.14.3]. In addition to this, Locke also writes that to assent to the proposition, "The three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones" *is* to take those three angles to agree, in equality, to two right ones [4.15.1].

But then, since a proposition, as we have seen, consists in joining or separating signs, it follows that, for Locke, the joining or separating of signs *is* to make an affirmation or a negation. As a matter of fact, he defines judgment as "the putting *Ideas* together, or separating them from one another in the Mind, when their certain Agreement or Disagreement is not perceived, but *presumed* to be so" [4.14.4]. Locke appears to be making the same point in the following passage:

. . . the Mind, either by perceiving or supposing the Agreement or Disagreement of any of its *Ideas*, does tacitly within it self put them into a kind of Proposition affirmative or negative, which I endeavour to express by the terms *Putting together* and *Separating*. But this Action of the Mind, is easier to be conceived by reflecting on what passes in us, when we affirm or deny, than to be explained by Words [4.5.6].

It is "when we affirm or deny" that we join or separate our ideas.



Furthermore, since to combine signs in the manner of joining or separation is to make a judgment, the distinction between the components of such a complex (i.e. words or ideas) and the complex as a whole (i.e. proposition) is very crucial in Locke's theory just as in the traditional one. He often emphasizes that it is only the latter that involves truth and falsity.

. . . *Truth, or Falsehood*, being *never without some Affirmation, or Negation*, Express, or Tacit, it is not to be found, but where signs are joined or separated . . .  
[2.32.19].

By contrast, our ideas, no matter what sort they are, cannot properly be said to be true or false in themselves "till the Mind passes some Judgment on them; that is, affirms or denies something of them" [2.32.3]. In other words, on Locke's account, propositions are distinguished from ideas *in general* in terms of the former's involving truth or falsity.

#### 4.2 COMPLEX IDEAS AND PROPOSITIONS

Now despite such a distinction between propositions and ideas in general, in the drafts of the *Essay*, we find quite unlikely statements from Locke. In some places, he describes complex ideas of substances themselves as an "affirmation." In Draft A, it is said that any name of a substance is "in effect an affirmation."<sup>6</sup> In addition, in Draft B, Locke writes,

. . . complex Idea of a Swan is a kinde of affirmation that where such a kinde of shape colour bigness with such a necke & legs doth exist there also whole feet are joynd with them or such a kinde of voice as that of a swan is.

If a complex idea of a substance is an affirmation, it would follow that such an idea in itself involves truth and falsity. This, however, would amount to abandoning the distinction between propositions and ideas. How should we understand these apparently conflicting remarks?

A most plausible interpretation of this might seem to be that at the time of those drafts, Locke was not quite clear on the distinction between propositions and complex ideas and thus mistakenly took complex ideas of substances to be propositional. As a matter of fact, Locke says something which confirms such a reading. At one point in Draft A, he writes that our ideas, except for "those originall ones of the sense or operations of our minde," are "all the rest compounded & so are a kinde of affirmation."<sup>8</sup>

His point appears to be that all the ideas we have except for simple ones are propositional *because they are compounded*. If he did in fact hold such a view, it would be no wonder that he considers complex ideas of substances to be "a kinde of affirmation" since they are compounded.

M.A. Stewart, in his "Locke's Mental Atomism and the Classification of Ideas," argues that Locke's problem comes from his "taking over an older compositional model without appreciating that his adaptation of its terminology to the way of ideas had pre-empted its traditional application."<sup>9</sup> As we have seen, on Locke's theory, a proposition is defined, just as on the traditional account, as "the joining or separating of signs." However, this is not the only context in which Locke uses these idioms. According to him, the "joining" or "putting together" of ideas also constitutes the formation of complex ideas (while the "separating" of ideas also constitutes the framing of abstract ideas). Needless to say, Locke's using the same idioms in different contexts does not, in itself, imply that he would consider complex ideas as propositional simply because they are compounded. Yet, Stewart seems to argue, having seen no incompatibility between his own compositionism of simple/complex ideas and the traditional model, Locke ended up describing complex ideas in general as propositional for the reason that they are compounded. If

the product of compounding is to be distinct in the two cases, Stewart further points out, Locke should have explained the difference in the manner of compounding in them. But we find no sufficient account in the chapter on Particles where such an account is expected since

particles are for Locke an indication of all the ways of connecting and disconnecting ideas which do *not* result in complex or abstract ideas, and they can be used to distinguish a variety of "postures of the mind."<sup>10</sup>

Through the reading of some passages in the drafts of the *Essay*, I have suggested in the above that Locke's position is that the mind, in framing the complex ideas of *substances*, supposes the coexistence of a group of qualities in some existing thing. However, if Locke, as Stewart argues, was incapable of grasping the difference between the compositionality of the way of ideas and the logic-book tradition and thus came to consider complex ideas in general as propositional, it might also be argued that he remarks that the making of the ideas of substances is an affirmation not because he believes that the mind makes a supposition in the formation of these ideas, but simply because these ideas are complex and compounded. Furthermore, in such a case, it would not be the *formation* of the ideas of substances, but rather these ideas themselves that are propositional.

This line of thought, however, is incorrect. First, it is simply false to say that Locke is unable to see the

difference between his own compositionism and that of the Aristotelians. In order to show Locke's inability, Stewart cites at least two more passages besides the quoted remark that complex ideas are propositional because of their compoundedness. One of them is concerned with Locke's treatment of the "simple apprehension" of the logic-book system. At 2.23.14 of the *Essay*, Locke writes that

These *Ideas* of Substances, though they are commonly called simple Apprehensions, and the Names of them simple Terms; yet in effect, are complex and compounded [2.23.14].

Concerning this passage, Stewart criticizes Locke by saying that "he treats the 'simple apprehension' of the logic-book system as if it is misclassified because it is not a simple in his own system."<sup>11</sup> However, a careful reading will show that Locke's point here is not as simple-minded as Stewart contends. Although I shall discuss this issue later,<sup>12</sup> Locke's claim in the above passage can be explained as follows. Locke thinks that the Aristotelians are correct in calling the ideas of substances "simple apprehensions" in the sense that each of these ideas is one distinct idea. Yet, the singleness of these ideas, argues Locke, should not be understood in such a way that the content of these ideas is "simple," i.e. uncompounded and unmixed. On the contrary, our ideas of things consist of a list of observable qualities and powers experienced through encountering

various individuals in the world and thus are complex and compounded. Locke's intention in that passage, therefore, is not to attack the "simple apprehensions" of the logic-book system on the ground that they are not simple in his system.

Stewart also points out Locke's tendency to regard the two different system of compositionism as "part of a single continuum."<sup>13</sup> It is true that Locke from time to time talks of the two systems as part of a single continuum. However, this by no means need be taken to suggest that Locke identifies the two systems. Even in the passage quoted by Stewart, Locke is quite clear on the relationship between the two systems.

when I say the minde is furnished with these simple Ideas, & hath out of these joynd together made also compound Ideas as of star man horse eg king brother virtue temperance theft & c. The next thing it doth is to joyne two of these Ideas considerd as destinct together or separate them one from an other by way of affirmation or negation, which when it comes to be expressed in words is cald proposition & in this lies all truth & falsehood.<sup>14</sup>

It should be recognized that to make a distinction between the two systems of compositionism amounts to making a distinction between ideas and propositions. In the above passage, despite his using the phrase "joyne together" for both the formation of complex ideas and that of affirmative propositions, Locke does not confuse the two. It is obvious that what is framed by the joining of ideas is considered to be distinct in the two cases as only one of them is said to

involve truth and falsehood. In the above, I have shown that Locke understands the distinction between ideas and propositions through a consideration of his account in the *Essay*. However, his appreciation of the point is unmistakably clear already in Draft B.

. . . all the complex Ideas we have though they be made by the uniteing of a great many simple Ideas together, which when referred to the reality of things & supposed to be united together & coexist in such kinde of objects from whence they were taken are a kinde of affirmation. yet when these complex Ideas are considerd in them selves as an aggregate of soe many simple Ideas they are then but simple apprehensions & being each of them soe considerd but as one entire compound Idea . . . are not capable of truth or falsehood which properly belongs to propositions, which simple apprehensions or simple termes cannot be.<sup>15</sup>

This passage clearly shows that Locke, already in Draft B, had a clear understanding of the difference between complex ideas and propositions, and hence of the relationship between his brand of compositionism and the traditional one.

Stewart thinks that Locke's remark about complex ideas in general being propositional because of their compoundedness indicates his inability to grasp the relation between the two systems. However, given Locke's clear understanding of the distinction between ideas and propositions, it seems hardly plausible that Locke considers complex ideas in general as propositional for the reason that they are compounded.

What all this suggests, I believe, is rather that Locke's remark about complex ideas being propositional because of their compoundedness was made not as a general statement about the relation between complex ideas and propositions, but as a statement about the relation between some specific type of complex ideas and some specific type of propositions or affirmations. Now the passage in question, when fully quoted, reads as follows.

Hitherto I have spoken only of Ideas & how the understanding comes by them, & of the names given them, whereof though none be purely simple but those originall ones of the sense or operations of our minde, but are all the rest compounded & soe are a kinde of affirmation, though the whole compounded Idea being knowne under one name & taken altogether considered as one thing as man horse water lead & c. they may be treated of as simple apprehensions whereof though some may be deficient yet none of them can be said properly to be false, since these representations if they have noething in them but what is agreeable to the thing are true but if they have any thing in them disagreeing to the objects or things existing they cannot be said to be false representations or Ideas of an object which they doe not represent. But the error of the judgment is when the minde haveing framd an Idea concludes it agreeable to & the Idea of, some thing commonly cald by such a name . . . .<sup>16</sup>

There are at least two points to be noted here. First, although Locke writes that the ideas which are not "purely simple . . . are *all the rest* compounded & soe are a kinde of affirmation," his examples are limited only to those of substances such as man, horse, water and lead. This may not be simply by accident. For in an earlier section, Locke remarks that a "name" of a substance is "in effect an



affirmation,"<sup>17</sup> whereas concerning the ideas of *relations* and those of *modes*, he does not say anything like this even though they are both "made up of a collection of those many simple Ideas."<sup>18</sup> Moreover, we might notice his mention of "simple apprehensions" of the traditional logic. As far as the *Essay* and the rest of the drafts are concerned, his discussion of simple apprehension is exclusively with reference to ideas of substances. I suspect, then, that all these facts seem to indicate that what is contrasted with "original ones of the sense or operations of our minde" in the above passage are not complex ideas as such but rather those of substances. Such a speculation does not seem so outrageous, considering not only that this is, after all, a remark made in a draft, but also that his full discussion of the other types of complex ideas comes much later.

Secondly, it is to be recognized that even in this passage, Locke makes it quite clear that the "compounded" ideas, being considered as "one thing," may be treated as simple apprehensions which cannot be said, in themselves, to be true or false insofar as they are not referred to any object. Once again this shows Locke's clear understanding of the distinction between propositions and ideas.

This observation, however, does not make it any easier to understand what Locke means in the passage. For his point now appears to be that complex ideas of substances, not

complex ideas as such, are a kind of affirmation due to their compoundedness, whereas they are simple apprehensions and thus free from truth and falsity when considered as one single idea. Does Locke mean, then, that complex ideas of substances are sometimes propositional and sometimes not? Assuming that he makes a clear distinction between propositions and ideas, how can we understand such a claim as consistent with this distinction?

#### 4.3 THE UNITY OF IDEAS OF SUBSTANCES

While it is not clear why Locke calls complex ideas of substances "a kinde of affirmation," it is clear what sort of affirmation he thinks it is. Immediately after his remark in Draft B about the complex idea of a swan being a kinde of affirmation, Locke explains that it is an affirmation of the union or coexistence of a group of qualities one with another in one and the same subject.<sup>19</sup> In Draft A, Locke explained that the mind makes such an affirmation when it frames complex ideas of substances. There Locke writes,

. . . the first affirmation or negation of our mindes are about these materiall objects in the frameing of our Ideas of them which is noe more but this that where<sup>20</sup> there are some of these simple Ideas there there are others.

One might think, then, that when in Draft B and elsewhere Locke talks of complex ideas of substances as "a kinde of affirmation," he really means that the formation of these ideas, not these ideas themselves, is a kind of affirmation. The question, however, is whether we can dismiss this simply as a slip of the pen. For in the *Essay*, Locke explains that the mind makes these ideas by considering several simple ideas "as they are united in external Objects" [2.12.1]. As I have pointed out in 3.3, if this operation of "considering" is to make a proposition, the product of such an operation, i.e. an idea of a substance, would also be propositional.

It is to be recognized here that we cannot account for this simply by resorting to Locke's failure to distinguish between complex ideas and propositions. For, first, as we have seen, Locke does make a clear distinction between the two in terms of the involvement with truth and falsity, and thus it is hardly probable that he identifies the two simply because of the compoundedness of substance ideas. Secondly, provided that Locke did fail in the distinction, this might explain why he calls ideas of substances propositional. However, it would not seem to explain why Locke identifies substance ideas particularly with this type of affirmation, i.e. the affirmation of the union of qualities in nature.

But how, then, should we understand Locke's apparent identification of the two? Isn't it a sheer contradiction to say that Locke, while distinguishing ideas from propositions, does not see the difference between the two?

Now, before considering this issue, I would like first to make one thing clear. That is, although at times Locke does appear to say that to suppose the coexistence of a set of qualities in some subject *is* to make a complex idea of a substance, yet a careful look at the text makes us see that this is not his official position. For instance, consider the following remark he makes at the outset of the chapter on our complex ideas of substances:

THE Mind being . . . furnished with a great number of simple *Ideas* . . . takes notice also, that a certain number of these simple *Ideas* go constantly together; which being presumed to belong to one thing . . . are called so united in one subject, by one name; which by inadvertency we are apt afterward to talk of and consider as one simple *Idea*, which indeed is a complication of many *Ideas* together [2.23.1].

The first half of this passage clearly shows Locke's view that while presuming a collection of qualities to belong to one thing gives a reason for the mind to consider the collection of ideas as one complex idea, it cannot in itself be equated with making the collection into one idea. His position, then, is that to form ideas of substances, the mind must do the following things: first, it supposes the coexistence of a group of qualities in one subject by putting a set of ideas together; secondly, it makes the set of ideas into one complex idea by considering these ideas themselves as one distinct thing.

Now, the phrase "by inadvertency" in the second half of the passage might make one think that Locke takes it to be a mistake that the mind considers a collection of ideas as one idea. Such a reading, however, is misguided. We must recognize that what Locke is saying in the above passage is that once a collection of ideas is considered to be one complex idea, we tend to mistake the singleness of the idea for the simplicity or uncompoundedness of it. The mistake, then, lies not in our considering a collection of ideas as one idea, but in our seeing a complex idea of a substance as a *simple* idea.

Therefore, it is also incorrect to say that in 2.23.1 and elsewhere (especially in 2.23.14), Locke is attacking the "simple apprehensions" of the traditional logic on the ground that simple apprehensions are complex on his own theory. As I have pointed out earlier, already in the drafts he is quite clear on the difference between his own compositionism and that of the traditional logic, and thus writes that complex ideas of substances, being single ideas, are said to be simple apprehensions.<sup>21</sup> I think that Locke's allusion in 2.23.1, as M.R. Ayers suggests, is to the doctrine that a natural kind or species has a unitary nature or essence.

A classic text is Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, where the substance-term 'man' is distinguished from compound terms such as 'athlete,' Aristotle's own example being the word 'himation' stipulatively defined as 'white man,' a complex of substrate and accident. Locke's claim is that the definition of all our substance-terms can be similarly broken down, the substrate being the unknown 'thing' which bears the accidents.<sup>22</sup>

In refuting such a doctrine, therefore, Locke is not attacking the simple apprehension of the traditional logic. He agrees that however compounded it is, any idea of a substance is one single idea. In his *Correspondence with Stillingfleet*, Locke writes of 2.23.1 that

. . . in this paragraph I only give an account of the idea of distinct substances, such as oak, elephant, iron, &c. how, though they are made up of distinct complications of modes, yet they are looked on as one idea, called by one name, as making distinct sorts of substances.<sup>23</sup>

#### 4.4 A COMPLEX OF IDEAS AS A COMPLEX IDEA OR AS A PROPOSITION

Locke's describing complex ideas of substances themselves "a kind of affirmation," as we have seen, seems to imply his identifying these ideas with the affirmation the mind makes in the formation of these ideas. Concerning this affirmation, I have explained earlier that it is the affirmation of the coexistence of certain qualities in some real existence. Locke, for instance, writes:

. . . the first affirmation or negation of our mindes are about these materiall objects in the frameing of our Ideas of them which is noe more but this that where there are some of these simple Ideas there there are others v.g. gold is ductil i.e. that in that subject wherein I finde a shineing yellownesse with great weight, flexibility & consistence in the cold & fludity in the fire & a certaine sort of sound &c there also I am sure to finde a fitnessse or power i.e. I can by fit instrument<sup>24</sup> bring it into an almost incomprehensible thinnesse . . . .

As I have pointed out, in the *Essay*, Locke does not offer such an account in his discussion of our complex ideas of substances in Book II. However, it is to be noticed that he does deal with this type of affirmation in Book IV, and we find an almost identical remark there.

At the outset of Book IV, Locke defines knowledge as "*the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our Ideas*" [4.1.2], and goes on to say that this agreement or disagreement may be reduced to four types: 1. ideantity or diversity; 2. relation; 3. co-existence or necessary connexion; 4. real

existence. The case significant to our discussion is the third type of agreement/disagreement, co-existence. In 4.1.5, Locke writes of co-existence,

The third sort of Agreement, or Disagreement to be found in our Ideas, which the Perception of the Mind is employ'd about, is Co-existence, or Non-co-existence in the same Subject; and this belongs particularly to Substances. Thus when we pronounce concerning *Gold*, that it is fixed, our Knowledge of this Truth amounts to no more but this, that fixedness, or a power to remain in the Fire unconsumed, is an Idea, that always accompanies, and is join'd with that particular sort of Yellowness, Weight, Fusibility, Malleableness, and Solubility in *Aqua Regia*, which make our complex Idea, signified by the word *Gold* [4.1.6].

There are several things to be noted here. First, although in the list given in 4.1.3, Locke simply speaks of "co-existence," he really means co-existence in the same subject, and thinks that this type of agreement is concerned particularly with our knowledge of substances. Secondly, since what is at issue here is the coexistence in substances, it seems to be the case that Locke actually means the coexistence of *qualities* in the same subject, rather than that of ideas. Finally, given his definition of knowledge, it would follow that we are able to acquire the knowledge concerning the coexistence of qualities in the same subject by perceiving the agreement of these qualities.

Now, according to Locke's theory of propositions, the mind supposes or judges the agreement or disagreement among objects by joining or separating the signs representing them. Thus, he defines judgment as "the putting *Ideas*



together, or separating them from one another in the Mind, when their certain Agreement or Disagreement is not perceived, but *presumed* to be so" [4.14.4]. For instance, Locke says that when a man supposes a certain kind of divisibility agree or disagree to a certain line:

he . . . *joins* or *separates* those two *Ideas*, viz. the *Idea* of that line, and the *Idea* of that kind of Divisibility, and so makes a mental Proposition, which is true or false, according as such a kind of Divisibility . . . does really agree to that Line, or no [4.5.6].

So if Locke's position is that the mind obtains the knowledge concerning the coexistence of certain qualities in the same subject by perceiving the agreement of these qualities, it would seem to be also his position that the mind supposes the coexistence by joining the ideas which stand for the qualities, since to join these ideas is to suppose the agreement of what they represent.

The question, however, is whether it is actually Locke's opinion that this is the kind of affirmation the mind makes in the formation of ideas of substances. For, as I have argued earlier, these ideas are made in reference to "things existing without us," and thus the supposition which the mind makes in the formation of them is that of the union of certain qualities in an existing thing. On the other hand, what he discusses in Book four is simply the coexistence in the same subject, not necessarily in an existing one.

To consider this issue further, there is a crucial passage in 4.9.1. In commencing the discussion of our knowledge of existence, Locke makes the following observation:

. . . *universal Propositions*, of whose Truth or Falsehood we can have certain Knowledge, concern not *Existence*; and further . . . all *particular Affirmations or Negations*, that would not be certain if they were made general, are only concerning *Existence*; they declaring only the accidental Union or Separation of *Ideas* in Things existing, which in abstract Natures, have no known necessary Union or Repugnancy [4.9.1].

According to him, a proposition is capable of general certainty if we are capable of discovering the agreement or disagreement affirmed in the proposition without referring to the real world. In his own words, "*general Certainty* is never to be found but in our *Ideas*" [4.6.16]. In the case of the propositions about substances, this happens either when they are "trifling," i.e. when the signification of the predicate-term is included in that of the subject-term, or when there is a "visible necessary connexion" among the ideas joined in the propositions.<sup>25</sup> It is in this sense that Locke says we can be sure of the truth of such a proposition because it does not concern existence.

But, of course, this is not the only type of proposition we make about substances. We might observe the coexistence of certain qualities in a particular substance in experience and make a proposition about it by joining

ideas. In this case, however, we cannot be sure of the truth of this proposition if it is understood in a general way. For, in this case, neither does each idea contain the others nor is there a visible connexion among them.

The point directly relevant to our discussion here is that Locke thinks that in the latter case the propositions declare the accidental union of qualities in *things existing*, not just in the same subject. It seems to be Locke's position, then, that in the formation of substance ideas, the mind supposes the coexistence of qualities in an existing subject by putting the ideas representing them together. This interpretation is given textual support by his own account of such a supposition in a draft of the *Essay*. In Draft B, Locke explains that the affirmation the mind makes in framing ideas of substances by collecting simple ideas is "an affirmation of their union or coexistence one with an other," and goes on to say that this is

almost all the affirmation of any proposition unlesse where more generall words are affirmed of those that are lesse general which is a verball predication.<sup>26</sup>

Although here he uses the term "verball predication," instead of "trifling proposition," his point is clear: in the affirmation made in the formation of substance ideas, each idea is not included in other ones, and thus such an affirmation is "instructive" or not merely verbal. It seems

to be the case, then, that Locke does identify the kind of affirmation made in the formation of substance ideas with what he called "particular affirmations" in 4.9.1. In addition, Locke says in the chapter on true and false ideas in Book II that an idea may be termed false if the mind has a complex idea of a non-existent thing and:

it *judges* it to agree to a Species of Creatures really existing; as when it *joins* the weight of Tin, to the colour, fusibility, and fixedness of Gold.<sup>21</sup>

Now what does all this imply about his view on such affirmations? It seems to indicate that the affirmations which the mind makes in the formation of ideas of substances is actually expressed by exactly the same combined complex of ideas as what is usually referred to as complex ideas of substances, insofar as he does not differentiate the propositional compounding of ideas from the non-propositional compounding of complex ideas. And this, I suspect, is what Locke means when he writes in Draft A and elsewhere that complex ideas of substances are "a kinde of affirmation." His point in these remarks is that a combined complex of ideas which he calls "complex ideas of substances," when construed as being combined in the propositional manner, is a proposition expressing the affirmation of the union of certain qualities in some existing subject. On the other hand, when the complex is

construed as being combined in the non-propositional manner, i.e. combined by the mind's power to consider a collection of ideas as one distinct thing, it is a complex idea of a substance and is incapable of truth or falsity. I believe this is the reason why Locke in the very same paragraph in Draft A describes complex ideas as a kind of affirmation and goes on to say in the same breath, "they may be treated of as simple apprehensions."<sup>28</sup> However, in another draft, we find a much more refined version of the same account:

. . . all the complex Ideas we have . . . which when referred to the reality of things & supposed to be united together & coexist in such kinde of objects from whence they were taken are a kinde of affirmation. yet when these complex Ideas are considered in them selves as an aggregate of soe many simple Ideas they are then but simple apprehensions & being each of them soe considered but as one entire compound Idea . . . are not capable of truth or falsehood . . . .<sup>29</sup>

It is true that had he made a clear distinction between the propositional compounding of ideas and the non-propositional compounding of them, he would never have claimed that complex ideas of substances are propositional, since in such a case, a proposition or a complex of ideas expressing an affirmation about the union of a set of qualities in nature would be distinct from the complex idea consisting of these ideas. It is to be recognized, however, that his describing ideas of substances as a kind of affirmation need not be taken to indicate a failure to

distinguish between ideas and propositions. What he means by this is that a collection of ideas constituting a complex idea of a substance is an affirmation about the coexistence of certain qualities in real existence if they are considered as being compounded in the propositional manner.

In fact, I suspect that what explains Locke's hesitation of explicitly admitting the propositional nature of the formation of substance ideas is his keen awareness of the distinction between ideas in general and propositions. While boasting his own brand of the compositionism of simple and complex ideas, the *Essay* is constructed in such a way that it, in its basic structure, conforms to the compositionism of the traditional logic books. The progression from the consideration of ideas and words in Books II and III to the study of propositions and knowledge in Book IV in the *Essay* does correspond to the progression from simple apprehensions to propositions in the traditional logic, although Locke's contempt for syllogism keeps him from including a separate treatment of arguments. Given the progressive character of the *Essay*, it seems likely that Locke did not want to dwell on the propositional nature of the formation of ideas of substances prior to his official discussion of propositions in Book IV.

In any case, it is his position that in the formation of ideas of substances, the mind supposes the coexistence of

certain qualities in nature and that in this the ideas of substances differ from those of mixed modes. According to Locke, ideas of substances are all made in reference to actual things, and he takes the mind's referring ideas to them to be propositional.

## FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER FOUR

1 M.A. Stewart, "Locke's Mental Atomism and the Classification of Ideas: I," in *Locke Newsletter* 10 (1979), p.53-72.

2 Pierre Gassendi, *Pierre Gassendi's Institutio Logica (1658)*, ed. and trans. Howard Jones (The Netherlands: Van Gorcum, 1981), p.102. As regards Gassendi's influence on Locke, see Richard W.F. Kroll, "The Question of Locke's Relation to Gassendi," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 45(1984): p.339-359.

3 For Gassendi, an idea is an image of the thing thought while Arnauld defines an idea as "anything in the mind when we can say truly that we think of a thing, whatever the manner in which we think of the thing" [*Arnauld*, p.33].

4 Antoine Arnauld, *Logic, or the Art of Thinking*, trans. James Dickoff and Patricia James (New York: Bobbs-Merrill, 1964), p.108. Concerning the fact that Locke was quite familiar with the *Logic*, see Charles W. Hendel's Foreword to the translation.

5 See *Meditations*, III and IV.

6 *Draft A*, p.8.

7 *Draft B*, p.167.

8 *Draft A*, p.18.

9 Stewart, op. cit., p.74.

10 Stewart, op. cit., p.76.

11 Stewart, op. cit., p.75.

12 See 4.3.

13 Stewart, op. cit., p.75.

14 *Draft A*, p.20.

15 *Draft B*, p.207.



16 *Draft A*, p.18.

17 *Draft A*, p.8.

18 *Draft A*, p.12, p.13. I will not get into the issue whether for Locke the ideas of relations are complex.

19 *Draft B*, p.167.

20 *Draft A*, p.4.

21 see *Draft A*, p.18 and *Draft B*, p.207.

22 M.R. Ayers, "The Ideas of Powers and Substances in Locke's Philosophy," revised edition of a 1975 paper, in *Locke on Human Understanding*, ed. I.C. Tipton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.87.

23 John Locke, *A Letter to the Right Reverend Edward Lord Bishop of Worcester, The Philosophical Works of John Locke*, vol.4 (London, 1823), p.17.

24 *Draft A*, p.4-5.

25 see *Essay* 4.8.9, 4.3.14.

26 *Draft B*, p.167.

27 *Essay* 2.32.22; emphasis added.

28 *Draft A*, p.18.

29 *Draft B*, p.207.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### IDEAS OF MIXED MODES AND IDEAS OF SUBSTANCES

#### 5.1 THE FORMATION OF MODE IDEAS AND ARBITRARINESS

In 3.3,, I have argued that for Locke the manner in which ideas of substances are made differs from that in which other complex ideas are formed in the sense that the formation of the former is propositional while that of the latter is not. In Locke's own words, ideas of substances are "made all of them in reference to Things existing without us" [2.30.5], whereas those of mixed modes, for instance, are "made *very arbitrarily*, made without Patterns, or reference to any real Existence" [3.5.3]. It is my contention, then, that when he talks of ideas of mixed modes being arbitrary, he does not mean, as Leibniz believes, that in the formation of these ideas, any collection of ideas can be bundled together. Instead, Locke's meaning, I suggest, is that the mind makes these ideas without referring them to any object, i.e. without making a supposition that the set of qualities represented by the component ideas of them correspond to a set of qualities occurring in nature. And thus he thinks it possible to distinguish these ideas from those of substances in terms of their arbitrariness.

As we have seen earlier, Locke in some places seems to maintain that the arbitrariness of ideas of mixed modes consists in the fact that in the formation of these ideas, the mind arbitrarily chooses a certain collection of ideas

over other possible collections and make them into one complex idea. And we have also seen that if we assume that for Locke these possible collections are already understood to be complex ideas, we might be led to the interpretation that what he means by the "arbitrariness" of ideas of mixed modes is actually the arbitrariness of the relation between these ideas and their names. That is, there is no intrinsic relation between ideas and names. Such an interpretation, however, is mistaken for at least two reasons: first, it is quite unlikely that Locke ever takes the possible collections to be complex ideas, since he makes a clear distinction between complex ideas and mere aggregates of distinct simple ideas; secondly and more importantly, such an interpretation is unable to provide the reason for Locke's distinguishing ideas of mixed modes from those of substances in terms of the former's arbitrariness.

How, then, should we understand the arbitrariness of ideas of modes? To grasp Locke's position correctly, I suggest that we consider his account once again. As we have seen, Locke, in elaborating what he means by the arbitrariness of mode ideas, poses such questions as this:

. . . what greater connexion in Nature, has the *Idea* of a Man, than the *Idea* of a Sheep with Killing, that this is made a particular Species of Action, signified by the word *Murder*, and the other not? [3.5.6].

Locke's point appears to be that given that the idea of

killing is incompatible neither with that of a man nor with that of a sheep, there is no necessity for the mind, in making an idea of a mixed mode, to combine the idea of killing with that of a man, rather than with that of a sheep. It seems to follow from this, then, that *any* idea may be combined with the idea of killing by the mind if these two ideas are mutually consistent. And probably this is what Locke means by the arbitrariness of ideas of mixed modes. But exactly wherein does this arbitrariness consists?

It should be realized at this point that in the formation of ideas of substances, to combine a collection of ideas is to suppose the coexistence of the qualities represented by them in some existing subject, as Locke says in Draft A:

. . . the first affirmations of our minde is in collecting many simple Ideas for the makeing one Idea of some sensible material or as we call it substantiall objects . . . .<sup>1</sup>

That is to say, these simple ideas are combined in the propositional manner. For Locke, the distinction between ideas and propositions is understood in terms of the involvement with truth or falsity, and therefore the multiplicity of the content of a collection alone does not make it propositional. Now, according to him, in the making of complex ideas in general, the mind does the following things.

First, It chooses a certain Number. Secondly, It gives them connexion, and makes them into one *Idea* [3.5.4].

On the other hand, his position on the formation of complex ideas of substances, I have suggested in 4.3, is that the mind first supposes the coexistence of a set of qualities in one subject by putting a set of ideas together and secondly makes the set of ideas into one complex idea by exercising its power of considering these ideas themselves as one distinct thing.

It seems, then, that the "choosing" of a certain number of ideas in the general account corresponds to the "supposing" of coexistence in the account of substance ideas. Choosing simple ideas, in the formation of substance ideas, is propositional. In doing this, the mind in effect makes an affirmation about existing objects. Once the mind collects a set of simple ideas in this way, it makes them into one complex idea by considering them as one thing. It follows that a collection of ideas which comes to constitute a complex idea of a substance is referred to real existence before the ideas are combined into one single idea. To put it differently, no set which is not referred to existence is made into a complex idea of a substance. And it is in this sense that Locke understands the non-arbitrariness of substance ideas. In 3.6.28, after saying that complex ideas of substances "are *not . . . made so arbitrarily, as those*

*of mixed Modes,"* he goes on to explain that

. . . the Mind, in making its complex *Ideas* of Substances, only follows Nature; and puts none together, which are not supposed to have an union in Nature [3.6.28].

The formation of ideas of substances is not arbitrary because it is not the case that the mind makes any arbitrary (consistent) set of ideas into one complex idea. It is to be recognized, however, that what really explains such a restriction in the making of these ideas is not the necessity for their component ideas to be compatible, but rather the fact that in collecting component ideas, the mind affirms the coexistence of a set of qualities in nature. In this, then, does the non-arbitrariness of ideas of substances ultimately consist.

By contrast, to choose simple ideas, in the formation of ideas of mixed modes, is not to refer them to a set of qualities occurring in nature. In other words, they are "made without . . . reference to any real Existence" [3.5.3]. In making a complex idea of a mixed mode, any idea can be combined with, say, the idea of killing in the sense that to choose or collect this idea is not, as in the formation of substance ideas, to affirm the coexistence of such a collection in nature. By the arbitrariness of these ideas, then, Locke means not that any combination of ideas can be made into a complex idea, but that collecting their

component ideas is not propositional. This point is made quite clear toward the end of 3.5.6.

. . . in the framing of these *Ideas* [of mixed modes], the Mind searches not its Patterns in Nature, nor refers the *Idea* it makes to the real existence of Things; but puts such together . . . without trying it self to a precise imitation of any thing that really exists [3.5.6].

For Locke, ideas of mixed modes are arbitrary because the formation of these ideas is not propositional while those of substances are not arbitrary because the mind makes a supposition in framing them. And this is why he thinks it possible to distinguish the former from the latter in terms of their arbitrariness.

## 5.2 BOLTON'S INTERPRETATION OF THE NATURE OF SUBSTANCE IDEAS

In the last section, I have suggested that what explains the non-arbitrariness of ideas of substances is the manner in which they are made: in framing these ideas, the mind *supposes* the coexistence of a certain set of qualities in nature, and thus it is not the case, as in other types of complex ideas, that any arbitrary consistent collection of ideas can be made into a complex idea. The making of such a supposition in the formation of substance ideas, however, does not imply that these ideas themselves are propositional, and this is consistent with Locke's distinction between ideas and propositions in terms of truth and falsity. To put it differently, while it is his position that our ideas of substances are all made with reference to things existing without us, yet he does not consider such a reference to existing things to be contained in them, that is to say, for him it is extrinsic to the ideas themselves.

Concerning the nature of ideas of substances, however, there is an interpretation which seems to be in direct conflict with mine. In her "Substances, Substrata, and Names of Substances in Locke's *Essay*,"<sup>2</sup> Martha Brandt Bolton argues that for Locke, the ideas of substances all have the reference to existing things built into them as part of their content, and that this is at least part of the reason why only these ideas contain what he calls "the idea of *substratum*."



Bolton begins her argument by considering the fact that Locke treats ideas of substances differently from those of mixed modes as to their reality. Of the reality of ideas of mixed modes, Locke writes,

*Mixed Modes . . . having no other reality, but what they have in the Minds of Men, there is nothing more required to those kinds of Ideas, to make them real, but that they be so framed, that there be a possibility of existing conformable to them [2.30.4].*

On the other hand, he says of the reality of ideas of substances:

*Our complex Ideas of Substances, being made all of them in reference to Things existing without us, and intended to be Representations of Substances, as they really are, are no farther real, than as they are such Combinations of simple Ideas, as are really united, and co-exist in Things without us [2.30.5].*

Locke's position seems to be, then, that ideas of modes are real if their component ideas are mutually compatible, whereas those of substances must not only be consistent but also include a collection of qualities coexisting in nature in order that they be real. Both types being no different in their being complex ideas, however, it might be asked why a different requirement for each case is necessary. Locke's answer to this, according to Bolton, is that it is because:

ideas of substances are "tacitly referred" to actual things and are "intended to be representations" of those actual things, whereas ideas of modes are not intended to represent anything in particular.<sup>3</sup>

One might think, then, says Bolton, that this implies the following about the difference between ideas of modes and those of substances: "the different intentions as to whether an idea represents an actual thing are contingently, extrinsically attached to the idea."<sup>4</sup>

Yet, Bolton maintains that such a reading is mistaken. To argue for this, she takes note of the fact that in his discussion of ideas of mixed modes, Locke allows that sometimes these ideas are formed by observing something. According to him, there are three ways in which we acquire ideas of mixed modes, and the first of them is

. . . by Experience and Observation of things themselves. Thus by seeing two Men wrestle, or fence, we get the *Idea* of wrestling or fencing [2.22.9, see also 2.22.2].

To say that ideas of mixed modes are sometimes taken from actual occurrences, Bolton seems to think, amounts to saying that these ideas are sometimes intended by the mind to represent actual things. However, if this is the case,

the difference between ideas of modes and those of substances cannot be simply that *as a contingent fact* ideas of substances are intended to be copies of actual things and ideas of modes are not.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, "the difference must be that ideas of substances are *necessarily* intended to copy things."<sup>6</sup>

It seems necessary, then, that this intention be somehow reflected in the collection of ideas which

constitute an idea of a substance in order that it must be intended to represent some actual things. And, needless to say, the only component common to all and only ideas of substances is the idea of substratum. Bolton thus conclude that

at least part of what is involved in the idea of substratum is the supposition that certain actual things are represented by the complex idea in which it is found.<sup>7</sup>

Hence, the difference between ideas of substances and those of modes lies in that the former include, as part of their content, the supposition that they represent certain actual things while the latter consist only of a collection of simple ideas and do not contain such a supposition as their component.

### 5.3 REFERENCE NOT CONTAINED IN IDEAS OF SUBSTANCES

The consideration of Bolton's interpretation of the nature of substance ideas in the last section reveals that her argument consists of two premises and a conclusion. The first premise states that Locke's handling of the reality of ideas according to different standards should be explained in terms of the difference in the nature of these ideas. The second premise is that Locke thinks ideas of mixed modes are sometimes intended to copy or represent actual things. Thus, if ideas of mixed modes are to be different from those of substances in their nature, Bolton concludes, the difference between the two must be that ideas of substances are *necessarily* intended to copy actual things while those of mixed modes are not.

As to the first premise, Locke, as we have seen earlier, does seem to be of such an opinion. What about the second premise? Bolton seems to think that Locke's allowing the possibility that ideas of mixed modes may be "taken from Observation, and the Existence of several simple *Ideas* so combined" [2.22.2] indicates that for him ideas of mixed modes are at least sometimes made with the intention of copying actual things. The question, however, is whether she is justified in identifying these two claims as she does without argument. In other words, does Locke mean that ideas of mixed modes are sometimes "intended to copy" actual

things when he says that these ideas are sometimes "taken from" collections of qualities occurring together in nature?

The fact of the matter, I believe, is that for Locke the two claims are not equivalent. Locke, in talking of the possibility of the mind's getting mode ideas, does not mean that these ideas are sometimes intended to copy actual things. Instead, he means that, in some cases, a set of simple ideas which come to constitute an idea of a mixed mode is "given" or "suggested" to the mind by external objects. When he explains the second way in which the mind obtains ideas of modes, he contrasts it with the first one (i.e. by experience and observation) by saying the following.

For consisting of a company of simple Ideas combined, they [ideas of mixed modes] may by words . . . be represented to the Mind of one who understands those words, though that complex Combination of simple Ideas were <sup>8</sup> never *offered* to his Mind *by the real existence of things*.

Moreover, in making ideas of mixed modes, it is said, the mind "unites and retains certain Collections . . . whilst others, that as often occur in Nature, and are as plainly *suggested by outward Things*, pass neglected without particular Names or Specifications."<sup>9</sup> It seems probable, then, that Locke thinks that the mind plays merely a passive role in receiving or perceiving a set of simple ideas which come to constitute mode ideas when they are suggested by external objects. Instead of actively collecting ideas, the mind, in such a case, simply makes use of a set given in

experience and makes them into one complex idea. Locke's remark in 2.22.2 that these ideas are sometimes "taken" from observation might be thought to suggest otherwise. It should be noticed, however, that the verb "to take" is sometimes used even in his account of the perception of simple ideas. For instance, Locke writes, "those [names] of simple Ideas are perfectly *taken from* the existence of things, and are not arbitrary at all."<sup>10</sup>

At any rate, the question relevant to our discussion is whether Locke thinks that the mind, in this case, supposes the conformity between a complex idea and certain sets of qualities occurring in nature. The fact is that his position is invariably that ideas of mixed modes are not supposed to represent anything, no matter how he thinks of the mind's role in getting them through observation and experience. Even before he discusses the possibility of framing mode ideas in this way, it is still said that these ideas are distinguished from those of substances because they "are not looked upon to be the characteristical Marks of any real Beings" [2.22.1]. By contrast, as we have seen, in the formation of ideas of substances, the mind "puts none together, which are not supposed to have an union in Nature" [3.6.28].

It would seem, then, that Locke's allowing the possibility of the mind's getting ideas of mixed modes

through observation need not be taken to imply that he thinks it to be the case that these ideas are sometimes intended to represent actual things. Bolton is not justified in deriving the latter claim from the former. Furthermore, given this, it follows that the difference between ideas of substances and those of modes need not be characterized as being that ideas of substances are necessarily intended to represent actual things whereas those of modes are not.

In fact, Bolton's interpretation that ideas of substances contain such an intention as part of their content is at odds with Locke's doctrine in one crucial respect: it neglects his distinction between ideas and propositions in terms of truth or falsity. What we should recognize here is that Locke considers it propositional to intend a certain idea to be conformable to real existence. And hence, if Locke's position were that such an intention is contained in our ideas of substances as part of content, each of these ideas itself would be propositional, and this would amount to abandoning the distinction between ideas and propositions. The fact is that he thinks this intention extrinsic or contingently attached to our ideas.

All this is made unmistakably clear in his discussion of true and false idea in the second last chapter of Book II. There Locke observes that ideas themselves are sometimes called true or false. (To this he adds, "what Words are

there, that are not used . . . with some deviation from strict and proper Signification?" [2.32.1].) However, if we scrutinize each of such occasions, he continues, we shall find some "secret or tacit Proposition" which explains why the ideas are termed true or false. Does Locke think, then, that in such a case, a tacit proposition is *contained* in the ideas?

The answer is negative. "Our *Ideas*," says Locke, "being nothing but bare Appearances or Perceptions in our Minds, cannot properly and simply in themselves be said to be *true* or *false*" [2.32.1]. On the other hand, they are said to be capable of truth and falsity if "the Mind passes some Judgment on them; that is, affirms or denies something of them" [2.32.3]. Now, since ideas themselves are incapable of truth/falsity while they are capable of truth/falsity when the mind "refer" them to "any thing extraneous to them," it follows that ideas themselves do not contain such a supposition or reference to real existence. In short, the supposition is extrinsic to ideas themselves. So for Locke, even an idea of a non-existent substance such as a centaur has "no more Falshood in it, when it appears in our Minds; than the Name Centaur has Falshood in it, when it is pronounced by our Mouths, or written on some Paper" [2.32.3]. However, if Locke, as Bolton maintains, held the view that every substance idea has the reference to existing



things built into it as its constituent, he would have to say that the idea of a centaur can, in itself, be termed false.

The consideration of Locke's view on true and false ideas thus seems to reveal that insofar as he looks on the reference of ideas to real existence as being propositional, it is quite unlikely that he thinks our ideas of substances contain such a reference. Moreover, it seems to follow from this that it is also unlikely that he considers the difference between these ideas and those of mixed modes to be that the former are *necessarily* intended to represent actual things while the latter are not.

#### 5.4 THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN IDEAS OF SUBSTANCES AND IDEAS OF MIXED MODES

Bolton also argues that the interpretation that the reference to real existence is contingently attached to ideas of substances does not conform to Locke's doctrine. Although she lists several points, her objection to it boils down to this: if the intention is extrinsic to ideas, the classification of an idea as that of a substance or that of a mixed mode would never be absolute, but instead variable; and such is not Locke's opinion.

The fact of the matter, however, is that from time to time Locke does admit the possibility that ideas of substances be formed without the reference to real existence. For instance, it is said that

He that hath imagined to himself Substances such as never have seen, and fill'd his Head with *Ideas* which have not any correspondence with the real Nature of Things . . . may fill his Discourse, and, perhaps, another Man's Head, with the fantastical Imaginations of his own Brain [3.10.30].

That Locke considers the ideas formed in this way to be ideas of substances is evident from the fact that he treats them as those of substances in his discussion of the reality of ideas of substances in 2.30.5. It seems, then, that Locke considers the ideas of non-existent substances to be ideas of substances even if they are formed without being referred to real existence. Bolton, not allowing the possibility of substance ideas without carrying the intention, maintains

that ideas like these "involves a presupposition which is false."<sup>11</sup> This, however, does not seem to be Locke's opinion. As we have seen, he thinks that an idea of a non-existent thing such as that of a centaur has "no more Falshood in it . . . than the Name Centaur has Falshood in it" [2.32.3].

Furthermore, we might note his use of the term "imagination" in the quoted passage. Locke's observation concerns the case in which one forms ideas by "imagining" substances which have never existed. Locke elsewhere writes that "imagination is a picture drawn in our minds *without reference to a pattern*"<sup>12</sup> It does seem to be his view, then, that ideas of substances can be formed without being referred to real existence. In other words, it is his position that what is made without reference to real existence can still be an idea of a substance.

However, it should be pointed out that if Locke admits such a possibility, this would not be consistent with his own remark that ideas of substances are made *all of them* in reference to things existing without us. Moreover, neither does it seem to be consistent with the distinction between ideas of mixed modes and those of substances in terms of the former's "arbitrariness." For if my interpretation is correct, by the arbitrariness of mode ideas, Locke means that they are made without being referred to real existence.

So the distinction of the two types of complex ideas in this manner seems to break down.

Yet, I do not think this is the case. What this apparent inconsistency really indicates, I believe, is that Locke does not consider the reference to real existence to be what makes an idea substantial. In other words, it is because he thinks the reason for ideas' being substantial lies in something else than their being referred to real existence that he admits the possibility of these ideas being formed without such a reference. If Locke, as Bolton maintains, thinks that what makes an idea substantial is the fact that it contains the reference to actual things, he could not allow such a possibility.

By contrast, on my interpretation, the reference to actual things is contingently attached to these ideas, and hence it is *possible* that ideas of substances be formed without this reference. I suspect that this is the reason why Locke allows this possibility while claiming that ideas of substances are made in reference to real existence. In fact, at one point, Locke does say something like this:

. . . though Men may make what complex *Ideas* they please, and give what Names to them they will; yet if they will be understood, when they speak of Things really existing, they must, in some degree, conform their *Ideas* to the Things really existing they would speak of [3.6.28].

I take Locke's point in this passage to be that although it

is possible for ideas of substances to be formed without being referred to actual things, we do, as a matter of fact, make these ideas in reference to actual things in order to be able to talk about these things. We must recognize that even though it is *not* necessary for an idea to be formed in reference to actual things *in order for it be an idea of a substance*, it *is* necessary for it to be formed in reference to them insofar as we wish to communicate with each other about actual things. Hence, in this sense Locke thinks it necessary that ideas of substances be made in reference to actual things.

. . . the same necessity of conforming his *Ideas* of Substances to Things without him, as to *Archetypes* made by Nature, that *Adam* was under, if he would not wilfully impose upon himself, the same are all Men ever since under too [3.6.51].

On the other hand, Locke writes of ideas of mixed modes:

. . . what liberty *Adam* had at first to make any complex *Ideas* of mixed Modes, by no other Pattern, but by his own Thoughts, the same have all Men ever since had [3.6.51].

For Locke, then, the difference between ideas of substances and those of mixed modes can be characterized as this: that *as a contingent fact*, ideas of substances are formed in reference to actual things whereas those of mixed modes are not. It follows that his distinction between the two in terms of "arbitrariness" does not break down insofar as it is concerned with the distinction of *our* ideas.<sup>13</sup>

Now, it might be noticed that, in the quoted passage, Locke counts our need to communicate with each other as the reason for the necessity of conforming our ideas of substances to actual things. However, if this is the case, one might wonder why the same is not applicable to our ideas of mixed modes since we seem to have as much need to talk about mixed modes as we do to talk about substances. I think that Locke's official answer to this question should be sought in his view of *real knowledge*. According to him, we are able to achieve certain, real and general truths about mathematics and morality even if there are no such entities which fall under our ideas of mixed modes. By contrast, the only way we can acquire real knowledge about substances is to observe actual things. It is only then that we can be sure of the conformity between our ideas and the reality of things.

### 5.5 THE CLASSIFICATION OF IDEAS AND THE GENERAL IDEA OF SUBSTANCE

In the last section, I have argued that for Locke the reference to actual things is not what makes an idea substantial. But what makes it substantial then? I believe that this is the part which the idea of substratum or the general idea of substance is supposed to play. According to Locke, substratum is *something* wherein qualities or accidents subsist and from which they result [2.23.1]. So aside from the issue of exactly how it "supports" them, the idea of substratum is the general notion of a thing which is responsible, in some manner, for the coexistence or subsistence of various qualities. To quote Locke's own words, "the general idea of substance . . . is a complex idea, or being, with the relation of a support to accidents."<sup>14</sup>

The question, however, is why such a general idea is contained in every idea of a substance including that of a non-existent one. As we have seen, it is Locke's position that in the formation of ideas of substances the mind refers a collection of ideas to things existing without us. And to say this is to say that in the formation of these ideas, the mind supposes the conformity between a collection of ideas which come to constitute an idea of a substance and existing things. Moreover, this "conformity" is defined as the

correspondence between the set of qualities represented by such a collection of ideas and a set of qualities co-instantiated in a substance. What is important is that this correspondence is not simply with a set of qualities, but with a set *co-instantiated in a substance*. In other words, it is a correspondence with the qualities *of a substance*.

Thus, the supposition made in the formation of substance ideas can be formulated as this: that there is an  $x$  such that  $x$  is a substance to which a certain set of ideas conform.<sup>15</sup> It must be seen that the phrase " $x$  is a substance" in this formulation is not vacuous. Without such a specification, the supposed conformity might be between a collection of ideas and collections of qualities which Locke calls "modes." To put it differently, according to Locke's notion of "conformity," not only substances but also modes are considered to be the value of a variable. This is at least part of the reason why every idea of a substance contains the general idea of substance which represents a certain ontological type. In making ideas of substances, the mind supposes that there is a *thing* which has such and such properties. Thus, in his definition of this type of complex ideas, Locke writes that

The Ideas of Substances are such combinations of simple Ideas, as are taken to represent distinct particular things subsisting by themselves; in which the supposed, or confused Idea of Substance, such as it is, is *always the first and chief*.<sup>16</sup>



It would seem, then, that at least part of the function which the idea of substratum plays is to specify a certain type of being, i.e. substances. Thus, even if an idea were formed without being referred to actual things, this idea would be conformable only to substances insofar as it contains the idea of substratum as its constituent. In other words, it is an idea of a substance. On the other hand, ideas of mixed modes, lacking such a component, are conformable only to collections of qualities.

## FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER FIVE

1 *Draft A*, p.6.

2 Martha Brant Bolton, "Substances, Substrata and Names of Substances in Locke's *Essay*," in *Philosophical Review*, LXXXV, 4 (1976), p.488-513.

3 Bolton, op. cit., p.496.

4 Bolton, op. cit., p.496.

5 Bolton, op. cit., p.498.

6 Bolton, op. cit., p.498.

7 Bolton, op. cit., p.498.

8 *Essay* 2.23.3; emphasis added.

9 *Essay* 3.5.3; emphasis added.

10 *Essay* 3.4.17; emphasis added. Although, in this passage, the names of simple ideas, rather than simple ideas, are said to be taken from external things, it is obvious that Locke actually means that simple *ideas* are taken from them. As I have shown in 1.2, he thinks that there is no "natural connexion" between ideas and names. Furthermore, Locke also writes in 2.2.1 that "the Sight and Touch often take in from the same Object, at the same time, different *Ideas*."

11 Bolton, op. cit., p.499, footnote 28.

12 John Locke, *Miscellaneous Papers*, in Lord Peter King, *The Life of John Locke, with Extracts from his Correspondence, Journals, and Commonplace Books* (London: Henry Colburn, 1830), vol.2, p.170. Emphasis added.

13 It might still be argued that the distinction in terms of "arbitrariness" breaks down because *not all* of our ideas of substances are made with reference to actual things. But I do not think that this is the case. As I have argued, Locke's not denying the possibility that ideas of substances be formed without the reference indicates his belief that what makes an idea substantial is not this

reference, but something else. I believe this is why he allows the possibility while claiming that ideas of substances are all made in reference to actual things and thus not arbitrary.

14 John Locke, *A Letter to the Right Reverend Edward Lord Bishop of Worcester, The Philosophical Works of John Locke*, vol.4 (London, 1823), p.19.

15 Of Ideas of substances, Locke once wrote that they "are affirmations . . . when things are supposed to exist answering those complex ideas" [*Draft B*, p.166, footnote 21].

16 *Essay* 2.12.6; emphasis added.

## CHAPTER SIX

### CONCLUSIONS

At the outset of this thesis, I have suggested that a successful interpretation of what Locke means by the arbitrariness of ideas of mixed modes must account for two points: it must explain not only what this arbitrariness consists in, but also the reason why he thinks it possible to distinguish ideas of mixed modes from those of substances in terms of their arbitrariness. To achieve this goal, I have taken note of the fact that, in explaining the difference of these two types of ideas, Locke quite often refers to the difference between them in the manner in which they are formed. According to him, ideas of substances are all made in reference to actual things and thus not arbitrary whereas those of mixed modes are made without such a reference and thus arbitrary.

To establish the connexion between the two features of each type of complex ideas, I have next embarked on the analysis of the claim that ideas of substances are made in reference to actual things. In doing so, I have clarified two things.

First, I made it clear that to "refer" an idea to something, for Locke, is a technical term which derives ultimately from his theory of propositions. To refer an idea to some object is to "suppose" or "judge" that the idea is

conformable to this object. Moreover, since Locke understands the conformity between a complex idea and an object as the correspondence between the set of qualities specified by the idea and the set of qualities in that object, to refer a complex idea to actual things is to suppose that a set of qualities belong to actual things.

Secondly, I have argued that the formation of complex ideas in general requires the recognition of unity. Although this point has been noticed by some commentators, I have further argued that in the formation of complex ideas, the mind combines a collection of distinct ideas by its power of considering them as one single idea, and that, in the making of ideas of substances, the mind also considers a set of qualities as united in one thing. In other words, the formation of ideas of substances involves two different ways of composition: the mind first considers a set of qualities as united in one thing by combining a collection of ideas in the propositional manner, and then considers the collection of ideas as one complex idea.

Thus, I have concluded that the supposition or proposition the mind makes in the formation of ideas of substances is what explains the non-arbitrariness of these ideas. In making these ideas, the mind combines only the ones which are supposed to coexist in nature. By contrast, in forming ideas of mixed modes, the mind does not suppose

that there is a collection of qualities (i.e. a mixed mode) in nature which is conformable to a certain set of ideas. Consequently, there is no restriction in the formation of mode ideas as to what collection of ideas is combined into one complex idea, insofar as it is consistent.

What I tried to show next was Locke's clear understanding concerning the distinction between complex ideas and propositions. In doing this, I have also shown that despite his new way of ideas, Locke follows the compositional model of the traditional logic in his distinguishing ideas in general from propositions for the reason that ideas do not involve truth and falsity.

Thus, another crucial thesis is implied by the two points I have established. That is, given (a) that to "refer" an idea to actual things, for Locke, is propositional in nature, and further (b) that ideas are strictly distinguished from propositions, it follows that the reference to actual things is not contained in any idea. On this ground, I have rejected the interpretation that an idea of a substance is necessarily referred to actual things and the reference is included in it as the idea of substratum. Ideas of substances do not, in themselves, presuppose the existence of the things to which they are conformable.

In interpreting Locke's view on ideas of substances, we must recognize that there are really two separate issues

involved. First, as his classifying our ideas into those of modes, those of substances, those of relations and so on indicates, it reflects his ontology. These ideas are so named because there is a certain type of beings to which each of them is conformable. An idea is an idea of a substance because it is conformable only to a substance. Once this is realized, it will be seen that at least part of what is involved in the idea of substratum is to represent an ontological type, i.e. substances. I think that this is why he also calls this idea "the *general* idea of substance." On the other hand, ideas of mixed modes, not containing this idea, are conformable only to collections of properties which he calls "mixed modes."

This, however, is not the only issue included in Locke's theory of ideas of substances. As he remarks at the outset of the *Essay*, his main purpose is to "enquire into the Original, Certainty, and Extent of humane Knowledge" [1.1.2]. Since, for him, ideas are the "materials" of knowledge, it is very crucial to look into how our ideas are formed. It is in this context, then, that Locke claims that ideas of substances are all made in reference to actual things. This claim reflects his belief that our knowledge about substances is concerned with actual things encountered in experience. By contrast, we can attain the real knowledge about modes even if there are no such entities in nature,

and accordingly, ideas of modes are formed without reference to actual things.

For Locke, then, the statement that an idea is an idea of a substance or that an idea is conformable to a substance is clearly distinguished from the statement that an idea is referred to actual things. I believe that the recognition of this point takes us one step closer to the correct interpretation of Locke's view on the idea of substratum and complex ideas of substances.



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