

AN ESSAY CONCERNING  
HUMAN UNDERSTANDING

BY

JOHN LOCKE

*COLLATED AND ANNOTATED. WITH  
PROLEGOMENA, BIOGRAPHICAL, CRITICAL, AND HISTORICAL.*

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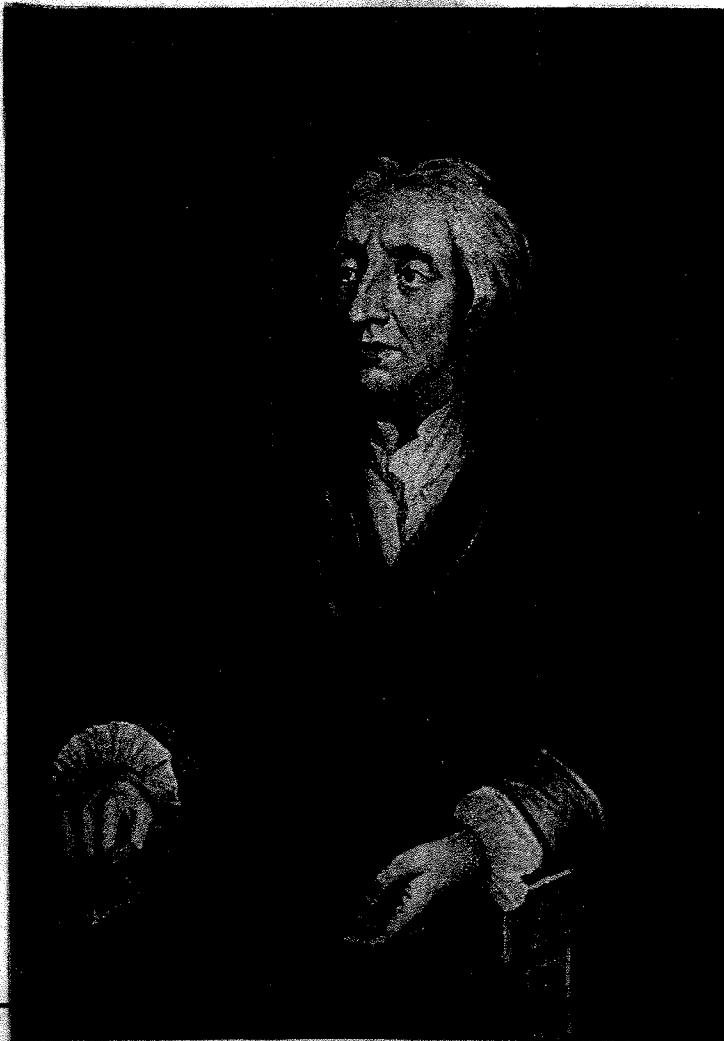
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JOHN LOCKE

## SYNOPSIS OF THE SECOND BOOK.

In the Second Book Locke offers what seems to him the true history of the ideas or phenomena in which the human understanding finds knowledge and probability, intending it to take the place of the 'established opinion,' controverted in the First Book,—that we are conscious at birth of certain regulating ideas and principles, which are thus independent of criticism and verification by experience. That all the simple ideas or phenomena of existence, with which the understanding of man can be concerned, are either, those presented in the five senses, which we refer to external things, or those presented in a reflex experience of our own mental operations,—is the counter thesis that is stated and illustrated in the first eleven chapters of the Second Book. That our most abstract ideas, how remote soever they may seem from data of sense or from operations of our own minds, are yet only such as our understanding frames to itself, by repeating, uniting, substantiating, and connecting ideas, received either from objects of sense or from its own operations about them, and thus by the active exercise of its faculties, is the theory of which chapters xii-xxviii contain the verification. It consists of 'a series of crucial instances,' intended to show that even in such complex ideas as those of *space, time, infinity, substance, power, identity, and morality*, which seem most remote from the original phenomena of experience, the understanding 'stirs not one jot beyond' those phenomena, by which, accordingly, our original ignorance of what exists is removed. The qualities of our simple and complex ideas,—as clear, distinct, adequate, and true, with their opposites, are illustrated in chapters xxix-xxxii. The Book concludes in chapter xxxiii with examples of mental 'association,' as an influence that is apt to mar the quality of our ideas, making them unfit to determine either knowledge or probability.

## CHAPTER I.

### OF IDEAS IN GENERAL, AND THEIR ORIGINAL.

I. EVERY man being conscious to himself that he thinks; and that which his mind is applied about whilst thinking being the *ideas* that are there<sup>1</sup>, it is past doubt that men have in their minds several ideas,—such as are those expressed by the words *whiteness, hardness, sweetness, thinking, motion, man, elephant, army, drunkenness*, and others: it is in the first place then to be inquired, *How he comes by them?*

I know it is a received doctrine, that men have native ideas, and original characters, stamped upon their minds in their very first being. This opinion I have at large examined already; and, I suppose what I have said in the foregoing Book will be much more easily admitted, when I have shown whence the understanding may get all the ideas it has; and by what ways and degrees they may come into the mind;—for which I shall appeal to every one's own observation and experience.

2. Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper<sup>2</sup>, void of all characters, without any ideas:—How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store which the busy and boundless fancy of man has painted on it with an almost endless variety? Whence has it all the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Introd. § 8. It must be remembered that 'ideas,' as treated of in the Second Book, are not regarded

as *cognitions* (the subject reserved for the Fourth Book), but as phenomena considered in abstraction from affirmation and denial, truth and falsehood, as simple apprehensions in short. And he here asks, in the 'historical plain method,' under what conditions the phenomena of real existence begin to

appear, and gradually multiply, in new combinations, in a human understanding?

<sup>2</sup> 'White paper' might suggest that we are originally void of ideas or appearances of which there is *consciousness*; but not necessarily void of *latent capacities and their intellectual implicates*. He means by the metaphor that we are all born ignorant of every thing.

BOOK II.  
CHAP. I.  
Idea is the Object of Thinking.

All Ideas come from Sensation or Reflection.

BOOK II. *materials* of reason and knowledge<sup>1</sup>? To this I answer, in  
 CHAP. I. one word, from EXPERIENCE<sup>2</sup>. In that all our knowledge is  
 founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our  
 observation employed either, about external sensible objects,  
 or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and  
 reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our under-  
 standings with all the *materials* of thinking<sup>3</sup>. These two  
 are the fountains<sup>4</sup> of knowledge, from whence all the ideas  
 we have, or can naturally have, do spring.

The  
 Objects of  
 Sensation 3. First, our Senses, conversant about particular sensible  
 objects, do convey into the mind several distinct perceptions<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Assuming, then, that the human mind is at first ignorant of every-thing,—what, he asks, is the explanation of the state in which adult human understanding may now be found, with its often rich stores of varied and elaborated ideas?

<sup>2</sup> 'Experience.' The ambiguity of this term is a main source of the controversies which the *Essay* has occasioned. Locke did not see that *innateness* (in a different meaning) and *experience* are not contradictories, but are really two different ways of regarding the possessions of the understanding. 'Our attitude towards the philosophy of Experience must entirely depend upon the meaning we put into the term experience. . . . The point on which issue should be joined is,—the identification of Experience with *mere* sense. If we prove that this is not so, and that, on the contrary, mere sense is an abstraction, impossible in *rerum natura*, Experientialism is at once shorn of all its supposed terrors.' (Seth, *Scottish Philosophy*, pp. 142, 2.)

What Locke argues for is, that, in respect of the time of its manifestation in the conscious life of each man, no knowledge that he possesses can precede awakening of intellectual life into (at first dim and imperfect) exercise through impressions on the senses. He thus makes our adult understand-

ing of things the issue of the exercise of the faculties in 'experience'; but he does not get in sight of Kant's question, or try to disengage the elements of reason through which a *scientific* or *intelligible* experience is itself possible,—the problem of the next great critique of a human understanding of the universe.

<sup>3</sup> But the '*materials* of thinking' presuppose, for their conversion into scientific experience, *intellectual conditions*, which conditions Locke either leaves in the background, or mixes up with the '*materials*,' i. e. with those gradually accumulated data without which our notions would be empty, and our common terms meaningless.

<sup>4</sup> The *exordium* of knowledge, back to which the *contents* of all our concepts may be traced, and apart from which they would be empty; not its *origo*, or the elements in the intellectual products that are found, after critical analysis of its logical constitution. Locke means by 'origin,' 'exordium,' which alone has relation to his 'historical' method. The acquired contents of our real knowledge, he goes on to show, must be either ideas of the qualities of matter, or ideas of the operations of mind.

<sup>5</sup> Here *perception* is virtually equivalent to *idea*—but regarded from the point of view of the apprehensive act, not of the phenomena apprehended.

of things, according to those various ways wherein those BOOK II.  
 objects do affect them. And thus we come by those *ideas* CHAP. I.  
 we have of *yellow, white, heat, cold, soft, hard, bitter, sweet,* one Source  
 and all those which we call sensible qualities; which when of Ideas.  
 I say the senses convey into the mind, I mean, they from  
 external<sup>1</sup> objects convey into the mind what produces there  
 those perceptions. This great source of most of the ideas  
 we have, depending wholly upon our senses, and derived by  
 them to the understanding, I call SENSATION<sup>2</sup>.

4. Secondly, the other fountain from which experience The  
 furnisheth the understanding with ideas is,—the perception Operations  
 of the operations of our own mind within us, as it is employed of our Minds,  
 about the ideas it has got;—which operations, when the soul the other  
 comes to reflect on and consider, do furnish the understanding Source of  
 with another set of ideas, which could not be had from things them.  
 without. And such are *perception, thinking, doubting, believing,*  
*reasoning, knowing, willing,* and all the different actings of  
 our own minds;—which we being conscious of, and observing  
 in ourselves, do from these receive into our understandings  
 as distinct ideas as we do from bodies affecting our senses.  
 This source<sup>3</sup> of ideas every man has wholly in himself; and  
 though it be not sense, as having nothing to do with external  
 objects, yet it is very like it, and might properly enough be  
 called *internal sense*<sup>4</sup>. But as I call the other Sensation, so

For the three cognate meanings of 'perception' in the *Essay*, see ch. xxi. § 5, the second and third of these being those only which 'use allows us' to attribute to the 'understanding.' In its third meaning 'perception' plays a great part in the Fourth Book.

<sup>1</sup> 'External objects,' i. e. extra-organic objects.

<sup>2</sup> This is one of Locke's definitions of *sensation*, which he here treats as incapable of analysis—passive impression of extra-organic phenomena upon the organism. Cf. § 23; also ch. xix. § 1.

<sup>3</sup> These metaphorical terms, 'source,' 'fountain,' 'channel,' which he employs here and elsewhere, are ambiguous. Is their equivalent *exordium*

or *origo*? The former alone is properly within the scope of the 'historical plain method' of psychology: the critical analysis which finds intellectual necessities presupposed in the operations of mind belongs to metaphysical philosophy, to which Locke's historical method is inadequate, if 'reflection' is limited to *contingent ideas* of 'internal sense.'

<sup>4</sup> That Locke applies the term *sense* to 'perception of the operations of our own mind,' seems to confine 'reflection' to empirical apprehension of mental states. But his use of this term is not conclusive on the point. Reid and Hamilton, along with many other philosophers, call the *a priori* or

BOOK II. I call this REFLECTION, the ideas it affords being such only  
 CHAP. I. as the mind gets by reflecting on its own operations within itself. By reflection then, in the following part of this discourse, I would be understood to mean, that notice which the mind takes of its own operations, and the manner of them, by reason whereof there come to be ideas of these operations in the understanding<sup>1</sup>. These two, I say, viz. external material things, as the objects of SENSATION, and the operations of our own minds within, as the objects of REFLECTION<sup>2</sup>, are to me the only originals from whence all our ideas take their beginnings. The term *operations* here I use in a large sense, as comprehending not barely the actions of the mind about its ideas, but some sort of passions arising sometimes from them, such as is the satisfaction or uneasiness arising from any thought.

All our Ideas are of the one or the other of these.

5. The understanding seems to me not to have the least glimmering of any ideas which it doth not receive from one of these two. *External objects*<sup>2</sup> furnish the mind with the ideas of sensible qualities, which are all those different perceptions they produce in us; and *the mind*<sup>2</sup> furnishes the understanding with ideas of its own operations<sup>3</sup>.

These, when we have taken a full survey of them, and their several modes, [<sup>4</sup> combinations, and relations,] we shall find to contain all our whole stock of ideas; and that we have

Common Reason a sense—the 'Common Sense.'

<sup>1</sup> Whether *reflection* should be interpreted in the *Essay* empirically or intellectually, is a primary question for the interpreter, since on the answer depends whether it includes *reflex consciousness of reason proper*, with the judgments therein necessarily presupposed as conditions of our having more in experience than the momentary data. The alternative was not contemplated by Locke.

<sup>2</sup> He, here and throughout, presupposes 'external material things' and 'our own minds,' as the causes of the phenomena (simple ideas) given in external and internal 'sense,' but without metaphysical discussion of the reason

of the assumption. This is (so far) inquired into in Bk. IV. ch. ix. and xi.

<sup>3</sup> So Bacon—'Homo, naturae minister et interpres, tantum facit et intelligit quantum de naturae ordine re vel mente observaverit.' (*Nov. Org.* Lib. I. Aph. 1.) 'The distinction intended by *re vel mente*,' says Dr. Fowler, 'may be either between the observation of facts and the subsequent process of reflection on such observation, or between external and internal perception. According to either interpretation the passage will remind the reader of the main position in Locke's *Essay*, to which it might well serve as a motto.' (Fowler's *Nov. Org.* p. 188.)

<sup>4</sup> 'and the compositions made out of them'—in the first three editions.

nothing in our minds which did not come in one of these two ways. Let any one examine his own thoughts, and thoroughly search into his understanding; and then let him tell me, whether all the original ideas he has there, are any other than of the objects<sup>1</sup> of his senses, or of the operations of his mind, considered as objects of his reflection. And how great a mass of knowledge soever he imagines to be lodged there, he will, upon taking a strict view, see that he has not any idea in his mind but what one of these two have imprinted;—though perhaps, with infinite variety compounded and enlarged by the understanding, as we shall see hereafter<sup>2</sup>.

6. He that attentively considers the state of a child, at his first coming into the world, will have little reason to think him stored with plenty of ideas<sup>3</sup>, that are to be the matter of his future knowledge. It is *by degrees* he comes to be furnished with them. And though the ideas of obvious and familiar qualities imprint themselves before the memory begins to keep a register of time or order, yet it is often so late before some unusual qualities come in the way, that there are few men that cannot recollect the beginning of their acquaintance with them. And if it were worth while, no doubt a child might be so ordered as to have but a very few, even of the ordinary ideas, till he were grown up to a man. But all that are born into the world, being surrounded with bodies that perpetually and diversely affect them, variety of ideas, whether care be taken of it or not, are imprinted on the minds of children. Light and colours are busy at hand everywhere, when the eye is but open; sounds

BOOK II.  
 CHAP. I.

Observable in Children.

<sup>1</sup> Leibniz grants that ideas are 'objects'—adding, 'pourvu que vous ajoutiez que c'est un objet immédiat interne, et que cet objet est une expression de la nature ou des qualités des choses. Si l'idée était la forme de la pensée, elle naîtrait et cesserait avec les pensées actuelles qui y répondent; mais en étant l'objet, elle pourra être antérieure et postérieure aux pensées.' (*Nouv. Essais*, Lib. II. i.) *The mind*, according to Leibniz, is its own immediate internal object; but only so far as

it contains (implicitly) 'ideas,' or what in intellect corresponds to things.

<sup>2</sup> See ch. xiii-xxviii. Does this limitation of our ultimate sources of experience make the *Essay* an expression of the materialistic formula,—'Every man counts as an animal; and no man can count for more than an animal'?

<sup>3</sup> 'Stored,' i. e. with phenomena of which there is consciousness—not potentially 'stored,' with conditions necessarily presupposed in the constitution of adult knowledge.

BOOK II. and some tangible qualities fail not to solicit their proper  
 CHAP. I. senses, and force an entrance to the mind ;—but yet, I think,  
 it will be granted easily, that if a child were kept in a place  
 where he never saw any other but black and white till he  
 were a man, he would have no more ideas of scarlet or green,  
 than he that from his childhood never tasted an oyster, or  
 a pine-apple, has of those particular relishes.

Men are differently furnished with these, according to the different Objects they converse with.

7. Men then come to be furnished with fewer or more simple ideas from without, according as the objects they converse with afford greater or less variety ; and from the operations of their minds within, according as they more or less reflect on them. For, though he that contemplates the operations of his mind, cannot but have plain and clear ideas of them ; yet, unless he turn his thoughts that way, and considers them *attentively*, he will no more have clear and distinct ideas of all the operations of his mind, and all that may be observed therein, than he will have all the particular ideas of any landscape, or of the parts and motions of a clock, who will not turn his eyes to it, and with attention heed all the parts of it. The picture, or clock may be so placed, that they may come in his way every day ; but yet he will have but a confused idea of all the parts they are made up of, till he applies himself with attention, to consider them each in particular<sup>1</sup>.

Ideas of Reflection later, because they need Attention.

8. And hence we see the reason why it is pretty late before most children get ideas of the operations of their own minds ; and some have not any very clear or perfect ideas of the greatest part of them all their lives. Because, though they pass there continually, yet, like floating visions, they make not deep impressions enough to leave in their mind clear, distinct, lasting ideas, till the understanding turns inward upon itself, reflects on its own operations, and makes them the objects of its own contemplation. Children [2 when they

<sup>1</sup> This may be interpreted consistently with the fact that, ideas and principles presupposed in mind and in real experience need intellectual effort to awaken them into consciousness. If so, it is not necessarily mere empiricism.

<sup>2</sup> In first edition—'at their first coming into the world seek particularly after nothing but what may ease their hunger or other pain, but take all other objects as they come ; are generally pleased with all new ones that are not painful ;'

BOOK II. come first into it, are surrounded with a world of new things,  
 CHAP. I. which, by a constant sollicitation of their senses, draw the mind constantly to them ; forward to take notice of new, and apt to be delighted with the variety of changing objects. Thus the first years are usually employed and diverted in looking abroad. Men's business in them is to acquaint themselves with what is to be found without ;] and so growing up in a constant attention to outward sensations, seldom make any considerable reflection<sup>1</sup> on what passes within them, till they come to be of riper years ; and some scarce ever at all.

9. To ask, at what *time* a man has first any ideas, is to ask, when he begins to perceive ;—*having ideas*, and *perception*, being the same thing<sup>2</sup>. I know it is an opinion, that the soul always thinks, and that it has the actual perception of ideas

The Soul begins to have Ideas when it begins to perceive.

<sup>1</sup> 'This reflection ought to be distinguished from consciousness, with which it is too often confounded, even by Mr. Locke. All men are conscious of the operations of their own minds at all times while they are awake ; but there are few who reflect upon them, or make them objects of thought.' (Reid, *Intell. Powers*, I. v.)

<sup>2</sup> The argument against constant 'thinking,' or constant consciousness in the human soul, 'as long as it exists,' elaborated in this and the ten following sections, looks like a digression, interpolated without reason in the exposition of Locke's thesis—that all our original ideas are phenomena of sensation and reflection. It is really meant to clear the ground. An 'innate idea,' according to Locke, is an idea of which the soul is conscious before the organs of sense have given rise to the normal conscious life within which the sphere of memory lies. But if an abnormal consciousness, divorced from memory, occurs in sleep, and other intervals of the normal life, this affords an analogy in support of a similar state of the soul antecedent to

any presentation of data of experience, and to all acquired knowledge. To show that there is no ground for the conclusion that the soul is conscious during sleep, when divorced from memory and the normal life of the man, is to deprive the advocate of innateness (in Locke's sense of innate) of the support of an analogy. If during later life the soul cannot have ideas, or be conscious, out of connection with memory, the supposed fact of a forgotten consciousness in sleep cannot be pleaded in support of its having been conscious, alike out of connection with memory and with the man, at or before birth. Locke fears that, 'if the soul should think whilst the organs of the external senses cease from exercise, it should steal some ideas which it had not got in his honest way of sensation [and reflection] only.' (Lee, *Anti-Scepticism*, p. 44.) This discussion about the continuity of consciousness, in §§ 9-19, might have found its place in the First Book, to which the subject of potential, as distinguished from actual, intelligence is cognate.

BOOK II. in itself constantly, as long as it exists; and that actual  
 CHAP. I. thinking is as inseparable from the soul as actual extension is  
 from the body<sup>1</sup>; which if true, to inquire after the beginning  
 of a man's ideas is the same as to inquire after the beginning  
 of his soul. For, by this account, soul and its ideas, as body  
 and its extension, will begin to exist both at the same time.

The Soul  
 thinks not  
 always;  
 for this  
 wants  
 Proofs.

10. But whether the soul be supposed to exist antecedent  
 to, or coeval with, or some time after the first rudiments of  
 organization, or the beginnings of life in the body, I leave to  
 be disputed by those who have better thought of that matter<sup>2</sup>.  
 I confess myself to have one of those dull souls, that doth  
 not perceive itself always to contemplate ideas; nor can con-  
 ceive it any more necessary for the soul always to think,  
 than for the body always to move: the perception of ideas  
 being (as I conceive) to the soul, what motion is to the body;  
 not its essence, but one of its operations. And therefore,  
 though thinking be supposed never so much the proper action  
 of the soul, yet it is not necessary to suppose that it should  
 be always thinking, always in action. That, perhaps, is the  
 privilege of the infinite Author and Preserver of all things,  
 who 'never slumbers nor sleeps'; but is not competent to any  
 finite being, at least not to the soul of man. We know  
 certainly, by experience, that we *sometimes* think; and thence  
 draw this infallible consequence,—that there is something in  
 us that has a power to think. But whether that substance  
*perpetually* thinks or no, we can be no further assured than  
 experience informs us. For, to say that actual thinking is

<sup>1</sup> The Cartesians are here im-  
 mediately in view, with their *a priori*  
 maxim as to the essence of the soul,  
 according to which its very existence  
 consists in *actual consciousness*, so that,  
 if consciousness were interrupted, it  
 would necessarily cease to exist. The  
 inquiry which Locke here undertakes  
 had been pursued apart from experi-  
 ence; at least, not by an appeal to facts.  
 The Cartesians justified their position  
 by arguing that that without which we  
 can have no notion, and with which we  
 have a distinct notion, of *spirit*, must

be an *essential* attribute of spirit, and  
 assume that this can be said only of  
 'thinking,' or being conscious.

<sup>2</sup> Locke confines his regard to 'soul'  
 as manifested in the present life. He  
 distrusts metaphysical inferences as to  
 its existence *prior* to the birth of the  
 body. Afterwards, on ground of super-  
 natural revelation, he expresses faith  
 in its existence *after* the dissolution  
 of this body—questions these which  
 concern metaphysical or theological  
 philosophy, not scientific psychol-  
 ogy.

essential to the soul, and inseparable from it, is to beg what  
 is in question, and not to prove it by reason;—which is  
 necessary to be done, if it be not a self-evident proposition<sup>1</sup>.  
 But whether this, 'That the soul always thinks,' be a self-  
 evident proposition, that everybody assents to at first hearing,  
 I appeal to mankind. [It<sup>2</sup> is doubted whether I thought at  
 all last night or no. The question being about a matter of  
 fact, it is begging it to bring, as a proof for it, an hypothesis,  
 which is the very thing in dispute: by which way one may  
 prove anything, and it is but supposing that all watches,  
 whilst the balance beats, think, and it is sufficiently proved,  
 and past doubt, that my watch thought all last night. But  
 he that would not deceive himself, ought to build his hypo-  
 thesis on matter of fact, and make it out by sensible ex-  
 perience, and not presume on matter of fact, because of his  
 hypothesis, that is, because he supposes it to be so; which  
 way of proving amounts to this, that I must necessarily think  
 all last night, because another supposes I always think, though  
 I myself cannot perceive that I always do so.]

But men in love with their opinions may not only suppose  
 what is in question, but allege wrong matter of fact. How  
 else could any one make it an inference of mine, that a thing  
 is not, because we are not sensible of it in our sleep? I do  
 not say there is no *soul* in a man, because he is not sensible  
 of it in his sleep; but I do say, he cannot *think* at any time,  
 waking or sleeping, without being sensible of it. Our being  
 sensible of it is not necessary to anything but to our thoughts;  
 and to them it is; and to them it always will be necessary,  
 till we can think without being conscious of it<sup>3</sup>.]

<sup>1</sup> Another recognition of 'self-evident  
 propositions,' while all intellectual in-  
 ateness is argued against.

<sup>2</sup> The remainder of this section  
 (within brackets) was added in the  
 second edition.

<sup>3</sup> That there may be ideas without any  
 consciousness of them—that thoughts  
 of which the individual is unconscious  
 may influence the individual—that  
 principles may exist potentially, in the

nature of things, explaining our experi-  
 ence of things—all this seems impos-  
 sible to Locke. Yet, as Leibniz says,  
 this is the knot of the main question of  
 the *Essay*—'le nœud de l'affaire.' It is  
 solved, he would say, by the hypothesis,  
 that the individual mind and the  
 universe of experience necessarily  
 contain more thought than there can  
 be a proper consciousness of, simul-  
 taneously, or even in succession, in

BOOK II.  
 CHAP. I.

BOOK II.

CHAP. I.

It is not  
always  
conscious  
of it.

11. I grant that the soul, in a waking man, is never without thought, because it is the condition of being awake. But whether sleeping without dreaming be not an affection of the whole man, mind as well as body, may be worth a waking man's consideration; it being hard to conceive that anything should think and not be conscious of it. If the soul doth think in a sleeping man without being conscious of it, I ask whether, during such thinking, it has any pleasure or pain, or be capable of happiness or misery? I am sure the man is not; no more than the bed or earth he lies on. For to be happy or miserable without being conscious of it, seems to me utterly inconsistent and impossible. Or if it be possible that the *soul* can, whilst the body is sleeping, have its thinking, enjoyments, and concerns, its pleasures or pain, apart, which the *man* is not conscious of nor partakes in<sup>1</sup>,—it is certain that Socrates asleep and Socrates awake is not the same person; but his soul when he sleeps, and Socrates the man, consisting of body and soul, when he is waking, are two persons: since waking Socrates has no knowledge of, or concernment for that happiness or misery of his soul, which it enjoys alone by itself whilst he sleeps, without perceiving anything of it; no more than he has for the happiness or misery of a man in the Indies, whom he knows not. For, if we take wholly away all consciousness of our actions and sensations, especially of pleasure and pain, and the concernment that accompanies it, it will be hard to know wherein to place personal identity<sup>2</sup>.

that mind. The latent stores of memory illustrate this, as even Locke acknowledges, ch. x. §§ 2, 7, 8, where he speaks of 'dormant' ideas. Leibniz goes further, when he adds—'il reste quelque chose de toutes nos pensées passées, et aucune n'en saurait jamais être effacée entièrement.' But while he argues that no past ideas of which we have been conscious can ever be entirely effaced, he allows that most of them must be latent, while the rest are consciously held. That we have ideas of which we are unconscious, is the

principal argument against Locke in Norris's *Cursory Reflections* upon the *Essay*, published in 1690, a few months after the *Essay* appeared.

<sup>1</sup> This does not apply to potential thought, with its necessary implicates, into which actual consciousness does not enter—the perception as distinguished from the apperception of Leibniz—which may be the condition of the 'soul,' and the whole 'man' in a deep sleep.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. ch. xxvii. Locke holds that consciousness constitutes personal iden-

12. The soul, during sound sleep, thinks, say these men. Whilst it thinks and perceives, it is capable certainly of those of delight or trouble, as well as any other perceptions; and it must necessarily be *conscious* of its own perceptions. But it has all this apart: the sleeping *man*<sup>1</sup>, it is plain, is conscious of nothing of all this. Let us suppose, then, the soul of Castor, while he is sleeping, retired from his body; which is no impossible supposition for the men I have here to do with, who so liberally allow life, without a thinking soul, to all other animals<sup>2</sup>. These men cannot then judge it impossible, or a contradiction, that the body should live without the soul; nor that the soul should subsist and think, or have perception, even perception of happiness or misery, without the body. Let us then, I say, suppose the soul of Castor separated during his sleep from his body, to think apart. Let us suppose, too, that it chooses for its scene of thinking the body of another man, v. g. Pollux, who is sleeping without a soul. For, if Castor's soul can think, whilst Castor is asleep, what Castor is never conscious of, it is no matter what *place* it chooses to think in. We have here, then, the bodies of two men with only one soul between them, which we will suppose to sleep and wake by turns; and the soul still thinking in the waking man, whereof the sleeping man is never conscious, has never the

tivity, which he has to reconcile with his argument here, that continuous personality is consistent with intervals of unconsciousness—in sleep, &c. But Butler objects, as against Locke, that 'though consciousness of what is past does ascertain our personal identity to ourselves, yet to say that it makes personal identity, or is necessary to our being the same persons, is to say that a person has not existed a single moment, nor done one action, but what he can remember. And we should really think it self-evident, that consciousness of personal identity presupposes, and therefore cannot constitute, personal identity, any more than knowledge in any other case can constitute the truth [reality] which it

presupposes.' (*Essay on Personal Identity.*)

<sup>1</sup> The 'man' means the soul in union with the body; 'soul,' *per se*, means the source of consciousness as it exists when the organs of external sense are dormant. Locke's assumption,—that either the soul or the man 'must necessarily be *conscious* of the perceptions,' is not self-evident, any more than the Cartesian supposition, that if consciousness is interrupted, there must either be *no soul during the interruption*, or else the soul of man is only a *special function of the human body*, which disappears when the appropriate organs cease from exercise.

<sup>2</sup> According to the Cartesians animals are unconscious automatons.

BOOK II. least perception. I ask, then, whether Castor and Pollux,  
 CHAP. I. thus with only one soul between them, which thinks and perceives in one what the other is never conscious of, nor is concerned for, are not two as distinct *persons* as Castor and Hercules, or as Socrates and Plato were? And whether one of them might not be very happy, and the other very miserable?<sup>1</sup> Just by the same reason, they make the soul and the man two persons, who make the soul think apart what the man is not conscious of. For, I suppose nobody will make identity of persons to consist in the soul's being united to the very same numerical particles of matter. For if that be necessary to identity, it will be impossible, in that constant flux of the particles of our bodies, that any man should be the same person two days, or two moments, together.

Impossible to convince those that sleep without dreaming, that they think. 13. Thus, methinks, every drowsy nod shakes their doctrine, who teach that the soul is always thinking. Those, at least, who do at any time *sleep without dreaming*, can never be convinced that their thoughts are sometimes for four hours busy without their knowing of it; and if they are taken in the very act, waked in the middle of that sleeping contemplation, can give no manner of account of it.

That Men dream without remembering it, in vain urged. 14. It will perhaps be said,—That the soul thinks even in the soundest sleep, but the *memory* retains it not<sup>2</sup>. That the soul in a sleeping man should be this moment busy a thinking, and the next moment in a waking man not remember nor be able to recollect one jot of all those thoughts, is very hard to be conceived, and would need some better proof than bare assertion<sup>3</sup> to make it be believed. For who

<sup>1</sup> This whimsical illustration implies that the source of consciousness in man is a substance that is capable of acting apart from his body; and even of occupying the body of another man;

which one might say it can no more be or do than one man can be actually conscious of the successive thoughts and feelings of another man.

<sup>2</sup> Locke's *first* argument for interrupted consciousness was,—that we cannot feel or think during sleep without being conscious of it *at the*

*time*. He now meets the objection, that we may have been conscious in sleep, but so slightly, or so rapidly, that when we awake we lose all memory of the consciousness.

<sup>3</sup> The phenomena of somnambulism have since been adduced, as evidence of the existence of intellectual activities wholly forgotten by the agent. The facts that persons suddenly awakened find themselves in a dream; also that dreams are often remembered only for a brief interval after awaking, and are

can without any more ado, but being barely told so, imagine that the greatest part of men do, during all their lives, for several hours every day, think of something, which if they were asked, even in the middle of these thoughts, they could remember nothing at all of? Most men, I think, pass a great part of their sleep without dreaming<sup>1</sup>. I once knew a man that was bred a scholar, and had no bad memory, who told me he had never dreamed in his life, till he had that fever he was then newly recovered of, which was about the five or six and twentieth year of his age. I suppose the world affords more such instances: at least every one's acquaintance will furnish him with examples enough of such as pass most of their nights without dreaming<sup>2</sup>.

then irrecoverably lost, are offered as evidence of the abnormal action of memory during sleep. For experimental reasons for concluding, that the mind has been then and otherwise conscious of activities afterwards wholly lost, see Jouffroy, *Mélanges Philos.*—Du Sommeil; Hamilton's *Lectures on Metaph.* xvii. But if remembered dreams occur only during the semi-conscious periods of falling asleep and of awaking, these experiments do not warrant the application of the inference to deep sleep. In this relation some curious facts, regarding unconsciousness in hysteria, are referred to in James's *Psychology*, ch. viii., suggesting occasions on which there is a disruption of the conscious life into separate consciousnesses, so that a part of the consciousness 'may sever its connection with other parts and yet continue to be.'

<sup>1</sup> Leibniz argues that we can never be without *perceptions*; but as he also maintains that perception may exist without *apperception* or consciousness, his position does not necessarily imply that we are never unconscious, or without dreams, even in deep sleep. Wolf adopts the views of Leibniz on this question, *Psychologia Rationalis*, § 59.

<sup>2</sup> This and what follows implies that *memory of dreams* is the *only* channel

through which there could be evidence of continuous mental activity during sleep; and also that the activity can never be an imperfect consciousness—both which assumptions may be disputed. The effects which semi-conscious and unconscious perceptions leave behind them in the current of conscious life, rather than memory, afford the evidence on which, for example, Leibniz relies: 'Il y a mille marques qui font juger qu'il y a à tout moment une infinité de perceptions en nous, mais sans aperception et sans réflexion; c'est-à-dire des changements dans l'âme même, dont nous ne nous apercevons pas, parce que ces impressions sont ou trop petites, et en trop grand nombre, ou trop unies, en sorte qu'elles n'ont rien d'assez distinguant à part; mais jointes à d'autres elles ne laissent pas de faire leur effet et de se faire sentir dans l'assemblage au moins confusément.' (*Novv. Ess. Avant-Propos.*) The phenomena of habit are then referred to as examples—e.g. unconscious perception of the motion of a mill or a waterfall, when we listened so long that the undulations at last induce perception without *apperception*; or the noise of the sea, in hearing which we must have an unconscious perception of the noise of



Upon this Hypothesis, the Thoughts of a sleeping Man ought to be most rational.

15. To think often, and never to retain it so much as one moment, is a very useless sort of thinking; and the soul, in such a state of thinking, does very little, if at all, excel that of a looking-glass, which constantly receives variety of images, or ideas, but retains none; they disappear and vanish, and there remain no footsteps of them; the looking-glass is never the better for such ideas, nor the soul for such thoughts. Perhaps it will be said, that in a waking *man* the materials of the body are employed, and made use of, in thinking; and that the memory of thoughts is retained by the impressions that are made on the brain, and the traces there left after such thinking; but that in the thinking of the *soul*, which is not perceived in a sleeping man, there the soul thinks apart, and making no use of the organs of the body, leaves no impressions on it, and consequently no memory of such thoughts. Not to mention again the absurdity of two distinct persons, which follows from this supposition, I answer, further,—That whatever ideas the mind can receive and contemplate without the help of the body, it is reasonable to conclude it can retain without the help of the body too; or else the soul, or any separate spirit, will have but little advantage by thinking. If it has no memory of its own thoughts; if it cannot lay them up for its own use, and be able to recall them upon occasion; if it cannot reflect upon what is past, and make use of its former experiences, reasonings, and contemplations, to what purpose does it think? They who make the soul a thinking thing, at this rate, will not make it a much more noble being than those do whom they condemn, for allowing it to be nothing but the subtilist parts of matter. Characters drawn on dust, that the first breath of wind effaces; or impressions made on a heap of atoms, or animal spirits, are altogether as

each wave, which produces conscious perception of the *collective* sound—clear in the aggregate but confused in the parts—since we could not otherwise become conscious of the sound of a hundred thousand waves; a hundred thousand nothings could not make something. Another explanation that

has been suggested of this want of memory is, that in deep and seemingly dreamless sleep, and other abnormal states, while there is continuous consciousness, the successive states are so rapid that there can be no retention of them, under the ordinary conditions of memory.

useful, and render the subject as noble, as the thoughts of a soul that perish in thinking; that, once out of sight, are gone for ever, and leave no memory of themselves behind them. Nature never makes excellent things for mean or no uses: and it is hardly to be conceived that our infinitely wise Creator should make so admirable a faculty as the power of thinking, that faculty which comes nearest the excellency of his own incomprehensible being, to be so idly and uselessly employed, at least a fourth part of its time here, as to think constantly, without remembering any of those thoughts, without doing any good to itself or others, or being any way useful to any other part of the creation. If we will examine it, we shall not find, I suppose, the motion of dull and senseless matter, any where in the universe, made so little use of and so wholly thrown away<sup>1</sup>.

16. It is true, we have sometimes instances of perception whilst we are asleep, and retain the memory of those thoughts: but how extravagant and incoherent for the most part they are; how little conformable to the perfection and order of a rational being, those who are acquainted with dreams need not be told. This I would willingly be satisfied in,—whether the soul, when it thinks thus apart, and as it were separate from the body<sup>2</sup>, acts less rationally than when conjointly with it, or no. If its separate thoughts be less rational, then these men must say, that the soul owes the perfection of rational

On this Hypothesis, the Soul must have Ideas not derived from Sensation or Reflection, of which there is no Appearance.

<sup>1</sup> It might be held that, instead of being 'useless,' these unremembered, because semi-conscious and unconscious, perceptions have immense efficacy in the spiritual economy. 'Ces petites perceptions,' Leibniz argues, 'sont donc de plus grand efficace qu'on ne pense. Ce sont elles qui forment ce je ne sais quoi—ces goûts, ces images des qualités des sens, claires dans l'assemblage, mais confuses dans les parties; ces impressions que les corps qui nous environnent font sur nous et qui enveloppent l'infini; cette liaison que chaque être a avec tout le reste de l'univers. On peut même dire qu'en conséquence de ces petites perceptions

le présent est plein de l'avenir et chargé du passé, que tout est conspirant, et que dans la moindre des substances, des yeux aussi perçants que ceux de Dieu pourraient lire toute la suite des choses de l'univers.' *Nouv. Essais*, Avant-Propos. Other 'useful' consequences of 'unconscious perceptions' are suggested in the sequel.

<sup>2</sup> No reason is given for the assumption, that even in dreams the soul thinks apart from the body, for there is experimental evidence that dreams are conditioned by the organism; though not equally with waking perception by the special organ of each sense.

BOOK II. thinking to the body: if it does not, it is a wonder that our  
 CHAP. I. dreams should be, for the most part, so frivolous and irrational; and that the soul should retain none of its more rational soliloquies and meditations.

If I think when I know it not, no-body else can know it.

17. Those who so confidently tell us that the soul always actually thinks, I would they would also tell us, what those ideas are that are in the soul of a child, before or just at the union with the body, before it hath received any by sensation. The dreams of sleeping men are, as I take it, all made up of the waking man's ideas; though for the most part oddly put together. It is strange, if the soul has ideas of its own that it derived not from sensation or reflection, (as it must have, if it thought before<sup>1</sup> it received any impressions from the body,) that it should never, in its private thinking, (so private, that the man himself perceives it not,) retain any of them the very moment it wakes out of them, and then make the man glad with new discoveries. Who can find it reason that the soul should, in its retirement during sleep, have so many hours' thoughts, and yet never light on any of those ideas it borrowed not from sensation or reflection; or at least preserve the memory of none but such, which, being occasioned from the body, must needs be less natural to a spirit? It is strange the soul should never once in a man's whole life recall over any of its pure native thoughts, and those ideas it had before it borrowed anything from the body; never bring into the waking man's view any other ideas but what have a tang of the cask, and manifestly derive their original from that union<sup>2</sup>. If it always thinks, and so had ideas before it

<sup>1</sup> Here again the metaphysical constitution (*origo*) of adult knowledge is reduced to a question regarding the history of the growth of knowledge in the individual. But, as Shaftesbury long ago observed, 'the question is not about the time the ideas entered, but whether the constitution of man [and of knowledge] be such that . . . sooner or later (*no matter when*) the ideas of order, administration, and a God, for instance, will not *infallibly, inevitably, necessarily spring up*'—because in-

involved in the rationality of things, and of our experience of their changes.

<sup>2</sup> The inadequacy of empiricism' to express the facts and implicates of experience is maintained, not on the ground that it neglects ideas which the soul was *conscious of* before it borrowed anything from the body, but because the knowledge to which man afterwards ascends, in union with his body, involves elements which cannot be analysed into mere sensations and their accidental aggregates. The first steps of

was united, or before it received any from the body<sup>1</sup>, it is not to be supposed but that during sleep it recollects its native ideas; and during that retirement from communicating with the body, whilst it thinks by itself, the ideas it is busied about should be, sometimes at least, those more natural and congenial ones which it had in itself, underived from the body, or its own operations about them: which, since the waking man never remembers, we must from this hypothesis conclude [either<sup>2</sup> that the soul remembers something that the man does not; or else that memory belongs only to such ideas as are derived from the body, or the mind's operations about them.]

18. I would be glad also to learn from these men who so confidently pronounce that the human soul, or, which is all one, that a man always thinks, how they come to know it; nay, how they come to know that they themselves think, when they themselves do not perceive it. This, I am afraid, is to be sure without proofs, and to know without perceiving. It is, I suspect, a confused notion, taken up to serve an hypothesis; and none of those clear truths, that either their own evidence forces us to admit, or common experience makes it impudence to deny. For the most that can be said of it is, that it is possible the soul may always think, but not always retain it in memory. And I say, it is as possible that the soul may not always think; and much more probable that it should sometimes not think, than that it should often think, and that a long while together, and not be conscious to itself, the next moment after, that it had thought<sup>3</sup>.

the intellectual ascent, in the form of expectations of the future, illustrate this. It is a contradiction to say that the *ultimate reason of expectation* is,—our individual and inherited experience that the future resembles the past; for men never had, and never can have, any experience of the *future*.

<sup>1</sup> Locke thus sees, in the hypothesis that the soul 'always thinks,' a support to the hypothesis of 'innate ideas,' according to his interpretation of 'innateness.'

<sup>2</sup> In first edition — 'that memory belongs only to ideas derived from the body, and the operations of the mind about them; or else that the soul remembers something that the man does not.'

<sup>3</sup> The kind of evidence which Locke's opponents would adduce is referred to in preceding notes. It is either *a priori*, or inference from observation of the phenomena of consciousness, in our waking normal state. But is there after all evidence

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 CHAP. I.

How knows any one that the Soul always thinks? For if it be not a self-evident Proposition, it needs Proof.

19. To suppose the soul to think, and the man not to perceive it, is, as has been said, to make two persons in one man<sup>1</sup>. And if one considers well these men's way of speaking, one should be led into a suspicion that they do so. For they who tell us that the *soul* always thinks, do never, that I remember, say that a *man* always thinks<sup>2</sup>. Can the soul think, and not the man? Or a man think, and not be conscious of it? This, perhaps, would be suspected of jargon in others. If they say the man thinks always, but is not always conscious of it, they may as well say his body is extended without having parts. For it is altogether as intelligible to say that a body is extended without parts, as that anything thinks without being conscious of it, or perceiving that it does so. They who talk thus may, with as much reason, if it be necessary to their hypothesis, say that a man is always hungry, but that he does not always feel it; whereas hunger consists in that very sensation, as thinking consists in being conscious that one thinks<sup>3</sup>. If they say that a man is always conscious to himself of thinking, I ask, How they know it? Consciousness is the perception of what passes in a man's own mind. Can another man perceive that I am conscious of anything, when I perceive it not myself? No man's knowledge here can go beyond his experience. Wake a man out of a sound sleep, and ask him what he was that moment thinking of. If he himself be conscious of nothing he then thought on, he must be a notable diviner of thoughts that can assure him that he was thinking. May he not, with more reason, assure him he was not asleep? This is something beyond philosophy; and it cannot be less than revelation, that discovers to another thoughts in my mind, when I can find none there myself. And they must needs have a penetrating sight who can certainly see that I

to justify a positive conclusion regarding this question, either in the form of *a priori* metaphysics, or a *posteriori* experiences?

<sup>1</sup> There are phenomena, observed since Locke wrote, which might suggest the supposition of this sort of double personality.

<sup>2</sup> What they might say is, that the conscious experience of the adult presents phenomena from which it may be inferred, that more was latent in it from the first than the subject of it was then conscious of.

<sup>3</sup> See previous notes.

think, when I cannot perceive it myself, and when I declare that I do not; and yet can see that dogs or elephants do not think, when they give all the demonstration of it imaginable, except only telling us that they do so. This some may suspect to be a step beyond the Rosicrucians<sup>1</sup>; it seeming easier to make one's self invisible to others, than to make another's thoughts visible to me, which are not visible to himself. But it is but defining the soul to be 'a substance that always thinks,' and the business is done. If such definition be of any authority, I know not what it can serve for but to make many men suspect that they have no souls at all; since they find a good part of their lives pass away without thinking. For no definitions that I know, no suppositions of any sect, are of force enough to destroy constant experience; and perhaps it is the affectation of knowing beyond what we perceive, that makes so much useless dispute and noise in the world<sup>2</sup>.

20. I see no reason, therefore, to believe that the soul thinks before the senses have furnished it with ideas to think on<sup>3</sup>; and as those are increased and retained, so it comes, by exercise, to improve its faculty of thinking in the several parts of it; as well as, afterwards, by compounding those ideas, and reflecting on its own operations, it increases its stock, as well as facility in remembering, imagining, reasoning, and other modes of thinking<sup>4</sup>.

21. He that will suffer himself to be informed by observation and experience, and not make his own hypothesis the rule of nature, will find few signs of a soul accustomed to much thinking in a new-born child, and much fewer of any reasoning at all. And yet it is hard to imagine that the

<sup>1</sup> The mystical society called *Rosicrucians*, with their secret symbols, was formed early in the seventeenth century. According to their doctrine, the four elements are inhabited by invisible spirits, with whom men may hold familiar intercourse on certain conditions.

<sup>2</sup> These objections fall if there is evidence, other than that of *present consciousness*, or *memory of past consciousness*, to show that men have been

unconsciously, or semi-unconsciously, active (in sleep).

<sup>3</sup> 'We are born ignorant of everything.' (*Conduct of Understanding*, § 38.)

<sup>4</sup> This and what follows, to the end of the chapter, is history of the gradual growth of experience in the individual man—not critical analysis of the ultimate rational constitution of the growing experience.

No ideas but from Sensation and Reflection, evident, if we observe Children.

State of a child in the mother's womb.

BOOK II. rational soul should think so much, and not reason at all.  
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 CHAP. I. And he that will consider that infants newly come into the world spend the greatest part of their time in sleep, and are seldom awake but when either hunger calls for the teat, or some pain (the most importunate of all sensations), or some other violent impression on the body, forces the mind to perceive and attend to it;—he, I say, who considers this, will perhaps find reason to imagine that a *fœtus* in the mother's womb differs not much from the state of a vegetable, but passes the greatest part of its time without perception or thought; doing very little but sleep in a place where it needs not seek for food, and is surrounded with liquor, always equally soft, and near of the same temper; where the eyes have no light, and the ears so shut up are not very susceptible of sounds; and where there is little or no variety, or change of objects, to move the senses<sup>1</sup>.

The mind thinks in proportion to the matter it gets from experience to think about.

22. Follow a child from its birth, and observe the alterations that time makes, and you shall find, as the mind by the senses comes more and more to be furnished with ideas, it comes to be more and more awake; thinks more, the more it has matter to think on. After some time it begins to know the objects which, being most familiar with it, have made lasting impressions. Thus it comes by degrees to know the persons it daily converses with, and distinguishes them from strangers; which are instances and effects of its coming to retain and distinguish the ideas the senses convey to it. And so we may observe how the mind, *by degrees*, improves in these; and *advances* to the exercise of those other faculties of enlarging, compounding, and abstracting its ideas<sup>2</sup>, and of

<sup>1</sup> It is easy thus to show that a child in its mother's womb is not consciously conversant with the abstract principles of the philosopher.

<sup>2</sup> According to Locke, men at first perceive and image individual objects. 'Our ideas every one of them are particular; universality is but accidental to them.' (Bk. IV. ch. xvii. § 8.) For the intellectual advance is from particular images to the intelligent use of common terms. In proportion

as men accumulate particular ideas, they become less conscious of them, and more apprehensive of their concepts. *Idea* is here confined to what is representable in the sensuous or individualising imagination (*φάντασμα*); and, so understood, an *abstract* idea (*διανόημα* and *νόημα*) is an absurdity. Yet we find more than is presentable in the senses, and representable in imagination, in those abstract meanings which we are intellectually obliged

reasoning about them, and reflecting upon all these; of which I shall have occasion to speak more hereafter.

23. If it shall be demanded then, *when* a man begins to have any ideas, I think the true answer is,—*when he first has any sensation*. For, since there appear not to be any ideas in the mind before the senses have conveyed any in, I conceive that ideas in the understanding are coeval with *sensation*; which is such an impression or motion made in some part of the body, as [produces<sup>1</sup> some perception] in the understanding<sup>2</sup>. [It<sup>3</sup> is about these impressions made on our senses by outward objects that the mind seems *first* to employ itself, in such operations as we call perception, remembering, consideration, reasoning, &c.]

24. [In<sup>4</sup> time the mind comes to reflect on its own operations about the ideas got by sensation, and thereby stores itself with a new set of ideas, which I call ideas of reflection. These are the impressions that are made on our senses by outward objects that are extrinsic to the mind; and its own operations, proceeding from powers intrinsic and proper to itself, which, when reflected on by itself, become also objects of its contemplation—are, as I have said, the original

to entertain,—so 'obliged,' we must presume, because reason is immanent in what is real, and thus objective as well as subjective.

<sup>1</sup> In first three editions—'makes it be taken notice of.' 'Sensation' is here an affection of the *organism*, and 'perception' the *mental apprehension* which accompanies or follows it.

<sup>2</sup> This is one of Locke's definitions of sensation, according to which it is an *organic* affection which may be manifested to the senses of an observer. In the next section he refers to it as the receptive 'capacity of the human *intellect*'; and in ch. xix. § 1 he describes it as 'the actual entrance of any idea into the *understanding* by the senses,' adding that 'the same idea, when it recurs without the operation of the like [extra-organic] object on the external sensory, is *remembrance*.'

It may thus with Locke include what has since been distinguished as sensuous feeling (sensation proper), and the intellectual apprehension in sense of solid extension in its various relations (perception proper).

<sup>3</sup> This sentence was introduced in the French version.

<sup>4</sup> The first four editions, instead of the sentences bracketed, read thus:—'The impressions then that are made on our senses by outward objects that are extrinsic to the mind; and its own operations about these impressions, reflected on by itself, as proper objects to be contemplated by it, are, I conceive, the original of all knowledge.' The two sentences within brackets appear first in the French version. The meaning of the second is obscure, unless for 'These are the impressions,' we read, 'Thus the impressions &c.'

BOOK II.  
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 CHAP. I.  
 A man begins to have ideas when he first has sensation. What sensation is.

The Original of all our Knowledge.

BOOK II. of all knowledge.] Thus the first capacity of human intellect  
 CHAP. I. is,—that the mind is fitted to receive the impressions made on it; either through the senses by outward objects, or by its own operations when it reflects on them<sup>1</sup>. This is the first step a man makes towards the discovery of anything, and the groundwork whereon to build all those notions which ever he shall have naturally in this world. All those sublime thoughts which tower above the clouds, and reach as high as heaven itself, take their rise and footing here: in all that great extent wherein the mind wanders, in those remote speculations it may seem to be elevated with, it stirs not one jot beyond those ideas which *sense* or *reflection* have offered for its contemplation<sup>2</sup>.

In the Reception of simple Ideas, the Understanding is for the most part passive.

25. In this part the understanding is merely passive; and whether or no it will have these beginnings, and as it were materials of knowledge, is not in its own power<sup>3</sup>. For the objects of our senses do, many of them, obtrude their particular ideas upon our minds whether we will or not; and the operations of our minds will not let us be without, at least, some obscure notions of them<sup>4</sup>. No man can be wholly ignorant of what he does when he thinks. These simple ideas, when offered to the mind<sup>5</sup>, the understanding

<sup>1</sup> That is to say, intelligence in the individual deals at first with concrete 'impressions,' and advances in the way of comprehending their more general, and at last their ultimate or philosophical relations. Whether in those ultimate relations Locke saw only generalisation by induction; or whether he recognised conditions necessarily embedded in all experience of reality, because necessities of the reason that is inherent in things, is the question to be settled in determining his philosophical position.

<sup>2</sup> Nothing, says Hume, is 'beyond the power of thought, except what implies an absolute contradiction.' But Locke here looks to the limits of the *materials*, contingently presented, with which human thought is concerned.

<sup>3</sup> This passivity, or *involuntariness*, is one of the marks by which external and internal perception are distinguished from plastic imagination. Mental images can be modified by our will, and are thus subject to our control; the data of sense, on the contrary, are independent of our will, as long as the objects are present to the senses; so that, in this respect, we are passive in the 'reception' of them. At another point of view than Locke's, we are active even in acquisition; for sense-perception itself necessarily involves some attention, and constructive activity of intelligence.

<sup>4</sup> In spontaneous self-consciousness, as distinguished from deliberate introspection.

<sup>5</sup> But he does not say that they are ever 'offered' in their simplicity—as

BOOK II. can no more refuse to have, nor alter when they are im-  
 CHAP. I. printed<sup>1</sup>, nor blot them out and make new ones itself, than a mirror can refuse, alter, or obliterate the images or ideas which the objects set before it do therein produce. As the bodies that surround us do diversely affect our organs, the mind is forced to receive the impressions<sup>2</sup>; and cannot avoid the perception of those ideas that are annexed to them.

*isolated* sensations. Elsewhere he implies the contrary, when he mentions 'ideas that necessarily accompany' all our other ideas, e.g. those of 'existence,' 'duration,' and 'substance.'

<sup>1</sup> 'imprinted,' i. e. in all actual perception external and internal.

<sup>2</sup> 'Impressions.' This term was afterwards employed by Hume to designate

'all our more lively perceptions, when we hear, or see, or feel, or love, or hate, or desire, or will,' in contrast with 'idea,' which he applies only to the 'less lively' mental representations of preceding 'impressions,'—in memory and imagination (*Hume's Inquiry concerning Human Understanding*, Sect. II).