AN ESSAY CONCERNING
HUMAN UNDERSTANDING

BY

JOHN LOCKE

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

BY

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IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I

Oxford
AT THE CLARENDON PRESS

M.DCCC.XCV
CHAPTER XXVII.

[Of Identity and Diversity.]

Book II.

Another occasion the mind often takes of comparing, is the very being of things, when, considering anything as existing at any determined time and place, we compare it with itself existing at another time, and thereon form the ideas of identity and diversity. When we see anything to be in any place in any instant of time, we are sure (be it what it will) that it is that very thing, and not another which at that same time exists in another place, how like and undistinguishable soever it may be in all other respects: and in this consists identity, when the ideas it is attributed to vary not at all from what they were that moment wherein we consider their former existence, and to which we compare the present. For we never finding, nor conceiving it possible, that two things of the same kind should exist in the same place at the same time, we rightly conclude, that, whatever exists anywhere at any time, excludes all of the same kind, and is there itself alone. When therefore we demand whether anything be the same or not, it refers always to something that existed such

1 This chapter was added in the second edition, on the suggestion of Molyneux. See Locke's letters to Molyneux, Aug. 23, 1693, and March 8, 1695.
2 Cf. Bk. I. ch. iii. §§ 4, 5 on the origin of the idea of identity. The numerical sameness or identity here in view must be distinguished from generic or specific unity, i.e. similarity, or the sameness that consists in a community of quality. When several objects are alike, one description will equally apply to any of them, and hence they are all said to be of the same nature or appearance. When we say, 'This table is made of the same wood as that other,' we only mean that the material in the one is indistinguishable in quality from that of which the other was constructed. This is the identity of similarity. Numerical sameness, on the contrary, does not necessarily imply outward similarity in the changing phenomena of the same substance.
of them exclude any of the same kind out of the same place: or else the notions and names of identity and diversity would be in vain, and there could be no such distinctions of substances, or anything else one from another. For example: could two bodies be in the same place at the same time; then those two parcels of matter must be one and the same, take them great or little; nay, all bodies must be one and the same. For, by the same reason that two particles of matter may be in one place, all bodies may be in one place: which, when it can be supposed, takes away the distinction of identity and diversity of one and more, and renders it ridiculous. But it being a contradiction that two or more should be one, identity and diversity are relations and ways of comparing well founded, and of use to the understanding.

3. All other things being but modes or relations ultimately determined in substances, the identity and diversity of each particular existence of them too will be by the same way determined: only as to things whose existence is in succession, such as are the actions of finite beings, e.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 at 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.

4. From what has been said, it is easy to discover what is principium individuationis; that, it is plain, is existence itself; which determines a being of any sort to a particular time and place, incomunicable to

...
two beings of the same kind. This, though it seems easier to conceive in simple substances or modes; yet, when reflected on, is not more difficult in compound ones, if care be taken to what it is applied: e.g. let us suppose an atom, i.e. a continued body under one immutable superficies, existing in a determined time and place; it is evident, that, considered in any instant of its existence, it is in that instant the same with itself. For, being at that instant what it is, and nothing else, it is the same, and so must continue as long as its existence is continued; for so long it will be the same, and no other. In like manner, if two or more atoms be joined together into the same mass, every one of those atoms will be the same, by the foregoing rule: and whilst they exist united together, the mass, consisting of the same atoms, must be the same mass, or the same body, let the parts be ever so differently jumbled. But if one of these atoms be taken away, or one new one added, it is no longer the same mass or the same body. In the state of living creatures, their identity depends not on a mass of the same particles, but on something else. For in them the variation of great parcels of matter alters not the identity: an oak growing from a plant to a great tree, and then lopped, is still the same oak; and a colt grown up to a horse, sometimes fat, sometimes lean, is all the while the same horse: though, in both these cases, there may be a manifest change of the parts; so that truly they are not either of them the same masses of matter, though they be truly one of them the same oak, and the other the same horse. The reason whereof is, that, in these two cases—a mass of matter and a living body—identity is not applied to the same thing.

1 Molyneux (March 3, 1693) exhorts Locke to 'insist more particularly and at large on the principium individuationis.' Le principe d'individuation revient, dans les individus, au principe de distinction, dont je viens de parler.' (Leibniz.) Individuality must not be confounded with personality.

2 'Compound ones,' e.g. aggregates of atoms, as distinguished from the separate particles. He has material substances in view.

3 The idea we have of our mental individuality contained in the consciousness of each ego being a unii, separated from every other ego, with a conscious life that is private, or confined to itself alone, belongs to personality, of which afterwards.

5. We must therefore consider wherein an oak differs from a mass of matter, and that seems to me to be in this, that the one is only the cohesion of particles of matter any how united, the other such a disposition of them as constitutes the parts of an oak; and such an organization of those parts as is fit to receive and distribute nourishment, so as to continue and frame the wood, bark, and leaves, &c., of an oak, in which consists the vegetable life. That being then one plant which has such an organization of parts in one coherent body, partaking of one common life, it continues to be the same plant as long as it partakes of the same life, though that life be communicated to new particles of matter vitally united to the living plant, in a like continued organization conformable to that sort of plants. For this organization, being at any one instant in any one collection of matter, is in that particular concrete distinguished from all other, and is that individual life, which existing constantly from that moment both forwards and backwards, in the same continuity of insensibly succeeding parts united to the living body of the plant, it has that identity which makes the same plant, and all the parts of it, parts of the same plant, during all the time that they exist united in that continued organization, which is fit to convey that common life to all the parts so united.

6. The case is not so much different in brutes but that any one may hence see what makes an animal and continues it the same in virtue of an immanent principle of life, so that when the parts are separated from the whole they lose their life. A branch separated from a tree, or a limb from an animal body, dissolves into its chemical and mechanically determined elements, from which the life has departed; whereas the separation of a stone into fragments leaves the qualities of the separated parts unaffected by the change. In an organism the parts are connected for a reason, and their union expresses a principle, that is inexplicable under merely mechanical law.

1 It is only in a loose sense that the 'organisation,' which is visible, can be identified with the 'life' which is invisible.

2 He finds the identity of a 'mass' of unorganised matter in the identity of its aggregated atoms, whereas that of a living organism consists in particular continuous life on the part of the continuously changing atoms that successively compose the organism. In an organism the fleeting parts are maintained in their organic life by their connection with the whole, while in an inorganic mass the whole is formed and constituted by mere aggregation of the parts. Organisms accordingly seem to be one and the same, in virtue of an immanent principle of life, so that when the parts are separated from the whole they lose their life. A branch separated from a tree, or a limb from an animal body, dissolves into its chemical and mechanically determined elements, from which the life has departed; whereas the separation of a stone into fragments leaves the qualities of the separated parts unaffected by the change. In an organism the parts are connected for a reason, and their union expresses a principle, that is inexplicable under merely mechanical law.
have been the same man: which way of speaking must be from a very strange use of the word man, applied to an idea out of which body and shape are excluded. And that way of speaking would agree yet worse with the notions of those philosophers who allow of transmigration, and are of opinion that the souls of men may, for their miscarriages, be detruded into the bodies of beasts, as fit habitations, with organs suited to the satisfaction of their brutal inclinations. But yet I think nobody, could he be sure that the soul of Heliogabalus were in one of his hogs, would yet say that hog were a man or Heliogabalus.

8. It is not therefore unity of substance that comprehends all sorts of identity, or will determine it in every case; but to conceive and judge of it aright, we must consider what idea the word it is applied to stands for: it being one thing to be the same substance, another the same man, and a third the same person, if person, man, and substance, are three names standing for three different ideas;—for such is the idea belonging to that name, such must be the identity; which, if it had been a little more carefully attended to, would possibly have prevented a great deal of that confusion which often occurs about this matter, with no small seeming difficulties, especially concerning personal identity, which therefore we shall in the next place a little consider.

9. An animal is a living organized body; and consequently the same animal, as we have observed, is the same continued life communicated to different particles of matter, as they happen successively to be united to that organized living body. And whatever is talked of other definitions, ingenious observation puts it past doubt, that the idea in our minds, of which the sound man in our mouths is the sign, is nothing else but of an animal of such a certain form. Since I think I may be confident, that, whoever should see a creature of his own shape

1 A watch, by superficial analogy, and yet essential contrast, is an apt illustration of the difference between inorganic masses, conditioned only by mechanical and chemical laws, and bodies which are one and the same in virtue of their continuous life.

2 The identity of a man, placed in one fitly organized body, is thus a physical identity, and is contrasted with the moral or personal identity considered in the sequel. The identity of a man is manifested to the senses, in his visible and tangible organism; identity of a person is manifested to the person himself, primarily in his self-consciousness, and by inferences founded on his organism.

1 'Body and shape,' as well as self-consciousness, being, he assumes, included in the ordinary connotation of 'man,' it is argued that if the consciousness of any man were transferred to the organism of a horse or a dog, so that its body became his body, and its motions were determined by his volitions, we could not, in propriety of speech, apply the name man to the living being thus endowed with a human consciousness, but in 'body and shape,' a horse or a dog.
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Identity of a Man.

BOOK II.

Chap. XXVII.

it thought that man was, pointing to the prince. It answered, 'Some General or other.' When they brought it close to him, he asked it, 'D'où venez-vous?' It answered, 'De Marinnan.'

The Prince, 'A qui estes-vous?' The parrot, 'A un Portugais.'

The Prince, 'Que fais-tu là?' Parrot, 'Je garde les poules.' The Prince laughed, and said, 'Vous gardez les poules?' The parrot answered, 'Oui, moi; et je sais bien faire;' and made the chuck four or five times that people use to make to chickens when they call them. I set down the words of this worthy dialogue in French, just as Prince Maurice said them to me. I asked him in what language the parrot spoke, and he said in Brazilian. I asked whether he understood Brazilian; he said No, but he had taken care to have two interpreters by him, the one a Dutchman that spoke Brazilian, and the other a Brazilian that spoke Dutch; that he asked them separately and privately, and both of them agreed in telling him just the same thing that the parrot had said. I could not but tell this odd story, because it is so much out of the way, and from the first hand, and what may pass for a good one; for I dare say this Prince at least believed himself in all he told me, having ever passed for a very honest and pious man: I leave it to naturalists to reason, and to other men to believe, as they please upon it; however, it is not, perhaps, amiss to relieve or enliven a busy scene sometimes with such digressions, whether to the purpose or no.'

I have taken care that the reader should have the Same man.

story at large in the author's own words, because he seems to me not to have thought it incredible; for it cannot be imagined that so able a man as he, who had sufficiency enough to warrant all the testimonies he gives of himself, should take up so much pains, in a place where it had nothing to do, to pin so close, not only a man whom he mentions as his friend, but on a Prince in whom he acknowledges

1. The parrot was asked, 'Whence come ye?' It replied, 'From Marinnan.' The Prince asked, 'To whom do you belong?' The parrot replied, 'To a Portuguese.' 'What do you there?' asked the Prince. The parrot answered, 'I look after the chickens.' The Prince laughed, and said, 'You look after the chickens.' The parrot answered, 'Yes, 1; and I know well enough how to do it.'

1 What follows within brackets was added in the fourth edition.

Sir William Temple, in his Memoirs of what passed in Christendom from 1652 to 1659, p. 66. See Stewart's Elements, vol. iii. note H, for remarks on this story, of which he says that it must have left a deep impression on the memory of all who have ever read Locke's Essay, adding that 'more than one of his professed admirers seemed to recollect little else which they had learned from that work than the story of this parrot.' The story is omitted in the French version of the Essay. If we met with an animal in outward appearance a parrot, but possessed of all intellectual and moral faculties supposed to be characteristic of man, should we name that animal a parrot or a man? This is a verbal question of arbitrary definition.

A rational Parrot.

1 This relation we have in an author of great note, is sufficient to countenance the supposition of a rational parrot. His words are:

I had a mind to know, from Prince Maurice's own mouth, the account of a common, but much credited story, that I had heard so often from many others, of an old parrot he had in Brazil, during his government there, that spoke, and asked, and answered common questions, like a reasonable creature: so that those of his train there generally concluded it to be witchery or possession; and one of his chaplains, who lived long afterwards in Holland, would never from that time endure a parrot, but said they all had a devil in them. I had heard many particulars of this story, and assevered by people hard to be discredited, which made me ask Prince Maurice what there was of it. He said, with his usual plainness and dryness in talk, there was something true, but a great deal false of what had been reported. I desired to know of him what there was of the first. He told me short and coldly, that he had heard of such an old parrot when he had been at Brazil; and though he believed nothing of it, and it was a good way off, yet he had so much curiosity as to send for it; that it was a very great and a very old one; and when it came first into the room where the prince was, with a great many Dutchmen about him, it said presently, What a company of white men are here! They asked it, what
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The Prince, it is plain, who vouches this story, and our author, who relates it from him, both of them call this talker a parrot: and I ask any one else who thinks such a story fit to be told, whether, if this parrot, and all of its kind, had always talked, as we have a prince’s word for it this one did,—whether, I say, they would not have passed for a race of rational animals; but yet, whether, for all that, they would have been allowed to be men, and not parrots? For I presume it is not the idea of a thinking or rational being alone that makes the idea of a man in most people’s sense: but of a body, so and so shaped, joined to it; and if that be the idea of a man, the same successive body not shifted all at once, must, as well as the same immaterial spirit, go to the making of the same man.

II. This being premised, to find wherein personal identity consists, I must consider what person stands for;—which, I think, is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking, and,

1 That Locke did not give this story of the rational parrot much credit, says Stewart, ’may be presumed from the cautious scepticism with which he expresses himself—a scepticism greater than might have been expected from that credulity in the admission of extraordinary facts, of which he has given so many proofs in the first Book of his Essay, and which seems to have been the chief defect in his intellectual character.’ Leibnitz describes a dog heard by him to converse with his master in articulate language. Stewart suggests that this phenomenon might probably be explained, ’by supposing the master of the dog to have possessed that peculiar species of imitative power which is called ventrilogism.’ The spectacle of a rational parrot, or a rational dog, ’would be,’ Stewart adds, ’in an extreme degree offensive and painful; and it is so in some degree merely when presented to the imagination.’ But why should one look with horror at an animal differing in shape very widely from ourselves, but possessing similar powers of reason and speech? What is ’offensive’ in the idea of the number of rational and responsible agents on this planet being greater than we had supposed?

2 ’Being and substance in this place stand for the same idea.’ (Butler.)

3 To the French version the following note on ’consciouness’ is appended: ’Le mot Anglais est consciousness, qu’on pourrait exprimer en Latin par celui de conscientia, si su-

matur pro actu illo hominis qui ait est conscius. Et c’est en ce sens que les Latins ont souvent employé ce mot, témoign cet endroit de Ciceron (Epist. Lib. vii. Epist. 4). En Françoys nous n’avons à nos avis que les mots de sentiment et de conscience qui correspondent en quelque sorte à cette idée. Mais, en plusieurs endroits de ce chapitre, ils ne peuvent qu’exprimer fort imperfectement la pensée de M. Locke.’ The term ’consciousness,’ in the sense of apprehension by the ego of its operations and other states as its own, came into use in the seventeenth century, among the Cartesian and in Locke, who sometimes confuses direct consciousness with the reflex act in which self is explicitly recognized. Although recently in almost as constant use with some psychologists as the term ’idea’ is with Locke, ’consciousness,’ so often introduced in this chapter, hardly occurs in any other part of the Essay. See, however, ch. i. §§ 10–19.

4 ’Self consciousness,’ says Ferrier, ’creates the ego’—’a being makes itself I by thinking itself.’ Locke and Ferrier so far regard the ego as the presupposition of the sum, instead of the sum as presupposed in the ego; but in the Essay the presupposition refers to the order of experience, according to which our idea of continued identity of person is formed.

5 That is, any positive idea we have of what identity of person means is that given in memory.

6 Here identity of person is limited to what is remembered—potentially as well as actually (!) ’Wherein,’ asks Berkeley, ’consists identity of person? Not in actual consciousness; for then I am not the same person I was this day twelvemonth, but only while I think of what I then did. Not in potential; for then all persons may be the same, for ought we know.’ (C.P.B. Works, vol. iv. p. 481.)

4 All attempts to define personal identity would but perplex it. Yet there is no difficulty at all in ascertaining the idea. For as upon two triangles being compared together, the idea arises to the mind the idea of similitude; or upon twice two and four
10. But it is further inquired, whether it be the same identical substance. This few would think they had reason to doubt of, if these perceptions, with their consciousness, always remained present in the mind, whereby the same thinking thing would be always consciously present, and, as would be thought, evidently the same to itself. But that which seems to make the difficulty is this, that this consciousness being interrupted always by forgetfulness, there being no moment of our lives wherein we have the whole train of all our past actions before our eyes in one view, but even the best memories losing the sight of one part whilst they are viewing another; and we sometimes, and that the greatest part of our lives, not reflecting on our past selves, being intent on our present thoughts, and in sound sleep having no thoughts at all, or at least none with that consciousness which marks our waking thoughts— I say, in all these cases, our consciousness being interrupted, and we losing the sight of our past selves, doubts are raised whether we are the same thinking thing, i.e. the same substance or no. Which, however reasonable or unreasonable, concerns not personal identity at all. The question being what makes the same person; and not whether it be the same identical substance, which always thinks in the same person, which, in this case, matters not at all: different substances, by the same consciousness (where they do partake in it) being united into one person, as well as different bodies by the same life are united into one animal, whose identity is preserved in that change of substances by the unity of one continued life. For, it being the

the idea of equality; so likewise upon comparing the consciousness of oneself in any two moments, there as immediately arises to the mind the idea of personal identity, . . . By reflecting on that which is myself now, and that which was myself twenty years ago, I discern that they are not two, but one and the same self. (Bp. Butler, Dissertation on Personal Identity.) And it is the 'idea,' or 'what makes personal identity to ourselves' that Locke is concerned with, in this Book, which deals with ideas, not with knowledge.

1 Cf. ch. x. § 9.
2 Cf. ch. i. §§ 10-17.
3 In thus pressing a distinction between identity of substance and identity of person, he seeks to show that the latter is independent of the former, and that the personality is continuous as far as memory (latent as well as patent!) can go, whatever changes of

annexed bodily or spiritual substances may take place; especially if (as he elsewhere suggests) the substance of a man is perhaps 'material'—as it may have pleased God to make conscience one of the qualities or powers of organised matter. All that is essential to the idea of personal identity is, that memory can bridge over the apparent interruptions in self-conscious life, whatever substance may be united with that life.

Here 'depends on,' not 'is constituted by,' as in other passages. It is the terms which contribute to the relation of personal identity—i.e. self now, and self in the past—in which this relation 'terminates,' that Locke has in view. As to our conviction of the identity of those terms, Butler remarks, 'But though we are certain that we are the same agents, living beings, or substances, now, which we were as far back as our remembrance reaches; yet it is asked whether we may not be deceived in it? And this question may be asked at the end of any demonstration whatever; because it is a question concerning the truth of perception by memory. And he who can doubt whether perception by memory may in this case be depended upon, may doubt also whether perception by deduction and reasoning which also include memory, or indeed whether intuitive perception can. Here then we can go no further. For it is ridiculous to attempt to prove the truth of those perceptions, whose truth we can no otherwise prove than by other perceptions of exactly the same kind with them, and which there is just the same ground to suspect.' (Dissertation on Personal Identity.)

As in a change from the 'natural body' to a 'spiritual body'—the person, and his accountability for his past conscious experience, remaining unchanged.

3 Making itself the same by its memory of itself, and thus in memory creating, and not merely discovering, itself—if the expressions in the text are strictly interpreted; the thinking substance 'contributing to the production' of the successive acts, which acts memory 'unites' in one person. (Cf. p. 413, note 2.)

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actions into the same person, whatever substances contrib-
uted to their production.

11. That this is so, we have some kind of evidence in our
very bodies, all whose particles, whilst vitally united to this
same thinking conscious self, so that we feel when they are
touched, and are affected by, and conscious of good or harm
that happens to them, are a part of ourselves; i.e. of
our thinking conscious self. Thus, the limbs of his body are to
every one a part of himself; he sympathizes and is concerned
for them. Cut off a hand, and thereby separate it from that
consciousness he had of its heat, cold, and other affections,
and it is then no longer a part of that which is himself, any
more than the remotest part of matter. Thus, we see the
substance whereof personal self consisted at one time may be
varied at another, without the change of personal identity;
there being no question about the same person, though the
limbs which but now were a part of it, be cut off.

12. But the question is, Whether if the same substance
which thinks be changed, it can be the same person; or, re-
main ing the same, can it be different persons?

And to this I answer: First, This can be no question at all
to those who place thought in a purely material animal con-
stitution, void of an immaterial substance. For, whether

1 'change of substance,' e.g. by
transmigration into another body—
'whatever substances'—whatever or-
organised body, or other substance.
2 Can the same personality—ac-
countability—be 'annexed' to two or
more substances, which all contribute
to the production of the memory by
which the personality is constituted?

1 'Je suis aussi de cette opinion,
que la conscience, ou le sentiment du
moi, provoqu une idéite morale ou
personnelle. Je ne voudrais point
dire que l'identité personnelle et même
le moi ne demeurent point en nous,
et que je ne suis point le moi qui
ait été dans le berceau, sous prétexte
que je ne me souviens plus de rien
de tout ce que j'ai fait alors. Il suffit,
pour trouver l'identité morale par soi-
même, qu'il y ait une moyenne liaison de
conscience d'un état voisin, ou même
un peu éloigné à l'autre, quand quelque
saut ou intervalle oublié y serait
mêlé.' (Leibniz.) When Locke makes
personal, i.e. moral identity depend
on memory, this may include potential
memory, in which our whole past con-
scious experience is possibly retained;
and when he suggests the transmigra-
tion of one man's memory into the
bodies of other men, or even of brutes,
this may be taken as an emphatic illus-
tration of the essential dependence
of the idea of our personality upon self-
consciousness only, but not as affirming
that this transmigration actually occurs
under the present order of things.

1 The animal organism is continu-
ously changing its particles, and this,
according to Locke, is change of the
'material substance.' Consciousness
that he is the same person, cannot be
consciousness that he is the same sub-
stance, to one who makes his body his
substance.
2 He maintains (ch. xxiii. §§ 5, 15,
dec.) that we have as clear (or as
obscure) an idea of what spiritual sub-
stances are as of material substances.
3 How does Locke thus distinguish
the spiritual substance from the self
that is given in consciousness? Is not
a person a spiritual substance mani-
fested? Here again he uses words
which seem to imply that a substance, material or spiritual, is one thing, and its mani-
festations of itself another and different
thing, by which too the substance is
concealed rather than revealed. But is
not our idea of personality rather the
highest form in which substance can be
conceived by us? On this subject see
Lotze's Metaphysics, Bk. III. ch. I.
passim, especially the reference to
Kant, § 244.
cannot possibly have it, will be hard for us to determine, till
we know what kind of action it is that cannot be done with-
out a reflex act of perception accompanying it, and how per-
formed by thinking substances, who cannot think without
being conscious of it. But that which we call the same
consciousness, not being the same individual act, why one
intellectual substance may not have represented it, as done
by itself, what it never did, and was perhaps done by some
other agent—why, I say, such a representation may not
possibly be without reality of matter of fact, as well as
several representations in dreams are, which yet whilst
dreaming we take for true—will be difficult to conclude from
the nature of things. And that it never is so, will by us,
till we have clearer views of the nature of thinking sub-
stances, be best resolved into the goodness of God; who, as
far as the happiness or misery of any of his sensible crea-
tures is concerned in it, will not, by a fatal error of theirs, transfer
from one to another that consciousness which draws reward
or punishment with it. How far this may be an argument
against those who would place thinking in a system of fleeting
animal spirits, I leave to be considered. But yet, to
return to the question before us, it must be allowed, that, if
the same consciousness (which, as has been shown, is quite
a different thing from the same numerical figure or motion in
body) can be transferred from one thinking substance to
another, it will be possible that two thinking substances may
make but one person. For the same consciousness being
preserved, whether in the same or different substances, the
personal identity is preserved.

1 In other words, we cannot be de-
ceived in our representational, but we
may in our representational experience.
2 Under the natural order of things,
which we are obliged to accept in faith, the identity apparent to the
person who feels himself the same,
with its implied moral responsibility,
is intransitive in fact.
3 According to Mr. Locke, we may
always be sure that we are the same
persons, that is, the same accountable
agents or beings, now which we were as
far back as our remembrance reaches:
or as far as a perfectly just and good
God will cause it to reach. (Per-
ronet’s Vindication of Locke, p. 21.)
The last clause suggests a conscious
revival of the latent stores of memory,
which may include all the past experi-
ence of the person.

14. As to the second part of the question, Whether the
same immaterial substance remaining, there may be two
distinct persons; which question seems to me to be built
on this,—Whether the same immaterial being, being conscious
of the action of its past duration, may be wholly stripped
of all the consciousness of its past existence, and lose it
beyond the power of ever retrieving it again; and so as it
were beginning a new account from a new period, have a
consciousness that cannot reach beyond this new state. All
those who hold pre-existence are evidently of this mind;
since they allow the soul to have no remaining consciousness
of what it did in that pre-existent state, either wholly separate
from body, or informing any other body; and if they should
not, it is plain experience would be against them. So that
personal identity, reaching no further than consciousness
reaches, a pre-existent spirit not having continued so many ages
in a state of silence, must needs make different persons.
Suppose a Christian Platonist or a Pythagorean should, upon
God’s having ended all his works of creation the seventh day,
think his soul hath existed ever since; and should imagine it
has revolved in several human bodies; as I once met with
one, who was persuaded his had been the soul of Socrates
(how reasonably I will not dispute; this I know, that in the
poet he filled, which was no inconsiderable one, he passed
for a very rational man, and the press has shown that he wanted
not parts or learning;)—would any one say, that he, being not
conscious of any of Socrates’s actions or thoughts, could be
the same person with Socrates? Let any one reflect upon
himself, and conclude that he has in himself an immaterial
spirit, which is that which thinks in him, and, in the constant

1 'There being in that case not only
no actual, but no potential memory of
a past conscious life.
2 'Hardly so, if the Platonic interpr-
etation of the universal ideas of reason,
as reminiscence of what we were con-
scious of, in a pre-existing state, is taken
literally, as rendered in Wordsworth’s
'Ode on Intimations of Immortality.'
3 'Consciousness,' i.e. memory, in-
cluding its latent possibilities.
4 But what if the conscious experi-
ence of Socrates, is all the while latent
in him, and capable of being recollected
by him, as on the thread of his con-
sciousness? When the recollection
occurs, Locke would say, he finds him-
self the same person who then went
under that name. Locke, is satirised
in Martinus Scriblerus for his paradox-
ical illustrations of the idea of personal
identity.
change of his body keeps him the same: and is that which he calls himself: let him also suppose it to be the same soul that was in Nestor or Thersites, at the siege of Troy, (for souls being, as far as we know anything of them, in their nature indifferent to any parcel of matter, the supposition has no apparent absurdity in it,) which it may have been, as well as it is now the soul of any other man: but he now having no consciousness of any of the actions either of Nestor or Thersites, does or can he conceive himself the same person with either of them? Can he be concerned in either of their actions? attribute them to himself, or think them his own, more than the actions of any other men that ever existed? So that this consciousness, not reaching to any of the actions of either of those men, he is no more one self with either of them than if the soul or immaterial spirit that now informs him had been created, and began to exist, when it began to inform his present body; though it were never so true, that the same spirit that informed Nestor's or Thersites' body were numerically the same that now informs his. For this would no more make him the same person with Nestor, than if some of the particles of matter that were once a part of Nestor were now a part of this man; the same immaterial substance, without the same consciousness, no more making the same person, by being united to any body, some of the particle of matter, without consciousness, united to any body, makes the same person. But let him once find himself conscious of any of the actions of Nestor, he then finds himself the same person with Nestor.

15. And thus may we be able, without any difficulty, to conceive the same person at the resurrection, though in a

The body, as well as the soul, having been once his own. But is memory the only means for testing or discovering one's personal identity? 

1 That is, he cannot have the idea of himself now, as one and the same with either of them; being unable, by memory, to connect his present consciousness with theirs. The supposed identity of 'spiritual substance' does not carry with it the idea of personal responsibility for the actions of Nestor, or of Thersites, unless he also finds himself conscious of their actions as

personal identity, is indifferent to sameness of body. 'My idea of personal identity,' Locke replies, 'makes the same body not to be necessary to making the same person, either here or after death; and even in this life the particles of the bodies of the same persons change every moment, and there is thus no such identity in the body as in the person.' Moreover, while the resurrection of the dead is revealed in scripture, we find 'no such express words there as that the body shall rise, or the resurrection of the body; and though I do not question that the dead shall be raised with bodies, as matter of revelation, I think it our duty to keep close to the words of the scripture.' (Cf. Bk. IV. ch. xviii. § 7.) The question of the identity of the risen body, with any or all the ever fluctuating bodies with which the person has been connected in this life, is irrelevant to Christianity.

2 Because sameness of person is directly revealed only to the person, or spiritual substance, whose identity is in question; but to all others only indirectly, by those visible signs from which we infer the existence and continued identity of other men.

3 No identity (other than perfect likeness) in any individuals besides
16. But though the same immaterial substance or soul does not alone, wherever it be, and in whatsoever state, make the same man; yet it is plain, consciousness, as far as ever it can be extended—should it be to ages past—unites existences and actions very remote in time into the same person, as well as it does the existences and actions of the immediately preceding moment: so that whatever has the consciousness of present and past actions, is the same person to whom they both belong. Had I the same consciousness that I saw the ark and Noah’s flood, as that I saw an overflowing of the Thames last winter, or as that I write now, I could no more doubt that I who write this now, that saw the Thames overflowed last winter, and that viewed the flood at the general deluge, was the same self,—place that self in what substance you please—than that I who write this am the same myself now whilst I write (whether I consist of all the same substance, material or immaterial, or no) that I was yesterday. For as to this point of being the same self, it matters not whether this present self be made up of the same or other substances—I being as much concerned, and as justly accountable for any action that was done a thousand years since, appropriated to me now by this self-consciousness, as I am for what I did the last moment.

17. Self depends on the present consciousness, or whatever substance made up of, (whether spiritual or material, simple or compounded, it matters not)—which is sensible or conscious of pleasure and pain, capable of happiness or misery, and so is concerned for itself, as far as that consciousness extends. Thus every one finds that, whilst comprehended under that consciousness, the little finger is as much a part of himself as what is most so. Upon separation of this little finger, should this consciousness go along with the little finger, and leave the rest of the body, it is evident the little finger would be the person, the same person; and self then would have nothing to do with the rest of the body. As in this case it is the consciousness that goes along with the substance, when one part is separate from another, which makes the same person, and constitutes this inseparable self: so it is in reference to substances remote in time. That with which the consciousness of this present thinking thing can join itself, makes the same person, and is one self with it, and with nothing else; and so attributes to itself, and owns all the actions of that thing, as its own, as far as that consciousness reaches, and no further; as every one who reflects will perceive.

18. In this personal identity is founded all the right and justice of reward and punishment; happiness and misery being that for which every one is concerned for himself, and not mattering what becomes of any substance, not joined to, or affected with that consciousness. For, as it is evident in the instance I gave but now, if the consciousness went along with the little finger when it was cut off, that would be the person, not substance, the objects of reward and punishment.
same self which was concerned for the whole body yesterday, as making part of itself, whose actions then it cannot but admit as its own now. Though, if the same body should still live, and immediately from the separation of the little finger have its own peculiar consciousness, whereof the little finger knew nothing, it would not at all be concerned for it, as a part of itself, or could own any of its actions, or have any of them imputed to him.

Which shows wherein personal identity consists.

19. This may show us wherein personal identity consists: not in the identity of substance, but, as I have said, in the identity of consciousness, wherein if Socrates and the present mayor of Queinborough agree, they are the same person: if the same Socrates waking and sleeping do not partake of the same consciousness, Socrates waking and sleeping is not the same person. And to punish Socrates waking for what sleeping Socrates thought, and waking Socrates was never conscious of, would be no more of right 2, than to punish one twin for what his brother-twin did, whereof he knew nothing, because their outsides were so like, that they could not be distinguished; for such twins have been seen.

20. But yet possibly it will still be objected,—Suppose I wholly lose the memory of some parts of my life, beyond a possibility of retrieving them, so that perhaps I shall never be conscious of them again; yet am I not the same person that did those actions, had those thoughts that I once was conscious of, though I have now forgot them? To which I answer, that we must here take notice what the word I is applied to; which, in this case, is the man only. And the same man being presumed to be the same person, I is easily here supposed to stand also for the same person. But if it

Locke determined by consciousness. But consciousness, Leibniz remarks, is not the only means of determining the identity of a person. It can be proved, sufficiently for practical purposes, by certain external appearances, which sufficiently signify that the person continues to be the same, as in questions of personal identity in courts of justice.

1 'same Socrates,' i.e. the same bodily appearance which signifies the man Socrates.

Because, although outwardly Socrates, he is not really Socrates, either man or person, if the apparent Socrates has ceased to partake of the same consciousness. Disease sometimes deprives persons of consciousness of their Identity.

Idea of Personal Identity.

be possible for the same man to have distinct incommunicable consciousness at different times 1, it is past doubt the same man would at different times make different persons; which, we see, is the sense of mankind in the solemnest declaration of their opinions, human laws not punishing the mad man for the sober man's actions, nor the sober man for what the mad man did,—thereby making them two persons: which is somewhat explained by our way of speaking in English when we say such an one is 'not himself,' or is 'beside himself'; in which phrases it is insinuated, as if those who now, or at least first used them, thought that self was changed; the selfsame person was no longer in that man.

21. But yet it is hard to conceive that Socrates, the same individual man, should be two persons. To help us a little in this, we must consider what is meant by Socrates, or the same individual man.

First, it must be either the same individual, immaterial, thinking substance; in short, the same numerical soul, and nothing else.

Secondly, or the same animal, without any regard to an immaterial soul.

Thirdly, or the same immaterial spirit united to the same animal.

Now, take which of these suppositions you please, it is impossible to make personal identity to consist in anything but consciousness; or reach any further than that does.

For, by the first of them, it must be allowed possible that a man born of different women, and in distant times, may be the same man 2. A way of speaking which, whoever admits, must allow it possible for the same man to be two distinct persons, as any two that have lived in different ages without the knowledge of one another's thoughts.

By the second and third, Socrates, in this life and after it, cannot be the same man any way, but by the same consciousness 3; and so making human identity to consist in the same

1 For curious cases of double, and of alternate personality, see James's Psychology, vol. i. pp. 379-99.

2 Because the animal organism is changed.

3 Because the same thinking sub-
thing wherein we place personal identity, there will be no difficulty to allow the same man to be the same person. But then they who place human identity in consciousness only, and not in something else, must consider how they will make the infant Socrates the same man with Socrates after the resurrection 1. But whatsoever to some men makes a man, and consequently the same individual man, wherein perhaps few are agreed, personal identity can by us be placed in nothing but consciousness, (which is that alone which makes what we call self,) without involving us in great absurdities 2.

22. But is not a man drunk and sober the same person? why else is he punished for the fact he commits when drunk, though he be never afterwards conscious of it? Just as much the same person as a man that walks, and does other things in his sleep, is the same person, and is answerable for any mischief he shall do in it. Human laws punish both, with a justice suitable to their way of knowledge;—because, in these cases, they cannot distinguish certainly what is real, what counterfeit: and so the ignorance in drunkenness or sleep is not admitted as a plea. [1 For, though punishment be annexed to personality, and personality to consciousness, and the drunkard perhaps be not conscious of what he did, yet human judicatures justly punish him; because the fact is proved against him, but want of consciousness cannot be proved for him.] But in the Great Day, wherein the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, it may be reasonable

1 This sentence may have suggested the following by Sir James Mackintosh:—'When the mind is purified from gross notions, it is evident that belief in a future state can no longer rest on the merely selfish idea of preserving its own individuality. When we make a further progress, it becomes indifferent whether the same individuals who now inhabit the universe, or others who do not yet exist, are to reach that superior degree of virtue and happiness of which human nature seems to be capable. The object of desire is, the quantity of virtue and happiness, not the identical beings who are to act and enjoy. Even those who distinctly believe in the continued existence (after death) of their fellow men are unable to pursue their opinion through its consequences. The dissimilarity between Socrates at his death, and Socrates in a future state, ten thousand years after death, is so very great, that to call these two beings by the same name is rather consequence of the imperfection of language than of exact views in philosophy. There is no practical identity. The Socrates of Elysium can feel no interest in recollecting what befell the Socrates at Athens. He is infinitely more removed from his former state than Newton was in this world from his infancy.' (L. vol. ii. p. 180.) But

2 Added in fourth edition.

3 'A man may be punished for any crime which he committed when drunk, whereof he is not conscious.' Locke allows, in reply to an objection of Molyneux to the statement in the text, that if a man may be justly punished for a crime committed when he was drunk, his theory of personal identity fails. 'You doubt whether my answer be full in the case of the drunkard. To try whether it be or no, we must consider what I am there doing. As I remember (for I have not that chapter here by me) I am there showing that punishment is annexed to personality, and personality to consciousness; how then can a drunkard be punished for what he did whereof he is not conscious? To this I answer: human judicatures justly punish him, because the fact is proved against him; but want of consciousness cannot be proved for him. This you think not sufficient, but would have me add the common reason,—that drunkenness being a crime, one crime cannot be alleged in excuse for another. This reason, how good soever, cannot I think be used by me, as not reaching my case; for what has this to do with consciousness? Nay, it is an argument against me; for if a man may be punished for any crime which he committed when drunk, whereof he is allowed not to be conscious, it overturns my hypothesis.' (9th Jan. 1664). In reply to this, Molyneux asks (Feb. 17, 1664), 'How it comes to pass that want of consciousness cannot be proved for a drunkard, as well as for a frantic? One methinks is as manifest as the other: if drunkenness may be counterfeit, so may a frenzy. Wherefore to me it seems that the law has made a difference in these two cases, on this account, viz. that drunkenness is commonly incurred voluntarily and premeditately; whereas a frenzy is commonly without our consent, or impossible to be prevented.' In the end, Locke replies (May 26, 1664):—'I agree with you that drunkenness, being a voluntary defect, want of consciousness ought not to be presumed in favour of the drunkard. But frenzy, being involuntary and a misfortune, not a fault, has a right to that excuse, which certainly is a just one, where it is truly a frenzy. And all that lies upon human justice is, to distinguish carefully between what is real, and what counterfeit in the case.'
23. Nothing but consciousness can unite remote existences into the same person: the identity of substance will not do it; for whatever substance there is, however framed, without consciousness there is no person: and a carcass may be a person, as well as any sort of substance be so, without consciousness.

Could we suppose two distinct incommunicable consciousnesses acting the same body, the one constantly by day, the other by night; and, on the other side, the same consciousness, acting by intervals, two distinct bodies: I ask, in the first case, whether the day and the night—man would not be two as distinct persons as Socrates and Plato? And whether, in the second case, there would not be one person in two distinct bodies, as much as one man is the same in two distinct clothings? Nor is it at all material to say, that this same, and this distinct consciousness, in the cases above mentioned, is owing to the same and distinct immaterial substances, bringing it with them to those bodies; which, whether true or no, alters not the case: since it is evident the personal identity would equally be determined by the consciousness, whether that consciousness were annexed to some individual immaterial substance or no. For, granting that the thinking substance in man must be necessarily supposed immaterial, it is evident that immaterial thinking thing may sometimes part with its past consciousness, and be restored to it again: as appears in the forgetfulness men often have of their past actions; and the mind many times recovers the memory of a past consciousness, which it had lost for twenty years together. Make these intervals of memory and forgetfulness to take their turns regularly by day and night, and you have two persons with the same immaterial spirit,

1 His accountability depending upon the possibility of awakening his latent memory of all that he was ever conscious of; which is thus capable of being brought out of latency, so as to become, as suggested by Coleridge, the Book of Judgment, ‘in the mysterious hieroglyphics of which every idle word is recorded.’

24. Indeed it may conceive the substance whereof it is now made up to have existed formerly, united in the same conscious being: but, consciousness removed, that substance is no more itself, or makes no more a part of it, than any other substance; as is evident in the instance we have already given of a limb cut off, of whose heat, or cold, or other affections, having no longer any consciousness, it is no more of a man’s self than any other matter of the universe. In like manner it will be in reference to any immaterial substance, which is void of that consciousness whereby I am myself to myself: [2 if there be any part of its existence which] I cannot upon recollection join with that present consciousness whereby I am now myself, it is, in that part of its existence, no more myself than any other immaterial being. For, whatsoever any substance has thought or done, which I cannot recollect, and by my consciousness make my own thought and action, it will no more belong to me, whether a part of me thought or did it, than if it had been thought or done by any other immaterial being anywhere existing.

25. I agree, the more probable opinion is, that this consciousness is annexed to, and the affection of, one individual immaterial substance.

But let men, according to their diverse hypotheses, resolve that of as they please. This every intelligent being, sensible of happiness or misery, must grant—that there is something that manifesting itself to itself? Berkeley, on the other hand, sees in ‘persons’ the only substances—personality and substance being identified. ‘Nothing properly but persons, i.e. conscious things, do exist. All other things are not so much [independent?] existences as modes of the existence of persons.’ (C.P.B. p.465). In this philosophy personality and its identity is the ultimate basis of all actual existence.
is himself, that he is concerned for, and would have happy; that this self has existed in a continued duration more than one instant, and therefore it is possible may exist, as it has done, months and years to come, without any certain bounds to be set to its duration; and may be the same self, by the same consciousness continued on for the future. And thus, by this consciousness he finds himself to be the same self which did such and such an action some years since, by which he comes to be happy or miserable now. In all which account of self, the same numerical substance is not considered as making the same self; but the same continued consciousness, in which several substances may have been united, and again separated from it, which, whilst they continued in a vital union with that wherein this consciousness then resided, made a part of that same self. Thus any part of our bodies, vitally united to that which is conscious in us, makes a part of ourselves: but upon separation from the vital union by which that consciousness is communicated, that which a moment since was part of ourselves, is now no more so than a part of another man’s self is a part of me: and it is not impossible but in a little time may become a real part of another person. And so we have the same numerical substance become a part of two different persons; and the same person preserved under the change of various substances. Could we suppose any spirit 1 wholly stripped of all its memory or consciousness of past actions 2, as we find our minds always are of a great part of ours, and sometimes of them all 3; the union or separation of such a spiritual substance would make no variation of personal identity, any more than that of any particle of matter does. Any substance vitally united to the present thinking being is a part of that very same self which now is; anything united to it by a consciousness of former actions, makes also a part of the same self, which is the same both then and now.

26. Person, as I take it, is the name for this self. Wherever a man finds what he calls himself, there, I think, another

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1 Throughout this discussion, what Locke means by ‘person’ must be kept in mind. If person means the living agent, or the man, then appropriation of past actions by present consciousness is not necessary to sameness of personality; since they are the same living agents, whether conscious or not of past and present actions. But a ‘person’ with Locke means an agent who is accountable for past actions. Although present ‘appropriation’ by consciousness of past actions is not implied in a living agent, it is necessary, according to the Essay, to our being persons, i.e., the proper objects of reward or punishment on account of them. If a man is not justly responsible for a past act, he is not the person by whom it was done, although he is the man or living agent through whom it was done; as no man can justly be punished for an action that cannot be brought home to his consciousness and conscience, as in a Book of Judgment. We are thus responsible only for voluntary actions which can by consciousness be appropriated to ourselves; consciousness uniting the most distant actions in one and the same personality. Consciousness that I am the same person cannot, Locke would say, be consciousness that I am the same substance, to any one who makes his body his substance. In short, we need not, he implies, for determining personality, embarrass ourselves with subtle questions about ‘substances’; they are irrelevant to the practical certainty that we are the same accountable agents, as far back as our remembrance of actions as ours can be made to reach, by a just and good God. Cf. § 11.

2 The character of the self in former times and places, as it appears in the memory, is thereby appropriated, i.e., personified. The name ‘person’ (persona) was given originally to the mask worn by actors, through the mouthplace of which the voice sent forth its sounds (personae); then to the mask itself; to the wearer of it, the actor; to the character acted; and at last to any assumed character.
in its first being, without any demerit at all. For, supposing a man punished now for what he had done in another life, of which he could be made to have no consciousness at all, what difference is there between that punishment and being created miserable? And therefore, conformable to this, the apostle tells us, that, at the great day, when every one shall receive according to his doings, the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open. The sentence shall be justified by the consciousness all persons shall have, that they themselves, in what bodies soever they appear, or what substances soever that consciousness adheres to, are the same that committed those actions, and deserve that punishment for them.

27. I am apt enough to think I have, in treating of this subject, made some suppositions that will look strange to some readers, and possibly they are so in themselves. But yet, I think they are such as are pardonable, in this ignorance we are in of the nature of that thinking thing that is in us, and which we look on as ourselves. Did we know what it

1 first being, i.e. insuchasmuch as he could not personify, or appropriate himself to himself, as formerly his.
2 The past consciousness having been finally or for ever obliterated. This implies that his own consciousness in memory is the only means by which he could in reason be satisfied that the action was his.
3 See § 18, in which it is implied that a murderer for example is not accountable for a murder of which his organism was the instrument, if a consciousness of it, as his own past act, cannot be awakened in him! It follows (unless unconscious experience is ultimately indissoluble) that any man who has forgotten that he committed a murder, did not personally commit it. Who, in that case, was the murderer?
4 They called forth a host of critics, Sergeant, Stillingfleet, Lee, Clarke in controversy with Collins, Butler, and Reid, with Vincent Perronet and others in defence. The main objection is thus

1 In all this the connection between the soul, or the self-conscious person, and the body is assumed to be accidental or contingent; so that the loss of the body by death or otherwise, is irrelevant to the immortality of the soul, or to that continued appropriation by consciousness of past experience on which responsibility or personality depends.
2 As in man, supposed to comprehend spiritual and also material substance—soul and body.
3 That is, if we exclude the body, as an accident and not of the essence of man, and mean by 'man' only the soul or 'rational spirit.'
it is easy to know what is the same man, viz. the same spirit—whether separate or in a body—will be the same man. Supposing a rational spirit vitally united to a body of a certain conformation of parts to make a man; whilst that rational spirit, with that vital conformation of parts, though continued in a fleeting successive body, remains, it will be the same man. But if to any one the idea of a man be but the vital union of parts in a certain shape; as long as that vital union and shape remain in a concrete, no otherwise the same but by a continued succession of fleeting particles, it will be the same man. For whatever be the composition whereof the complex idea is made, whenever existence makes it one particular thing under any denomination, the same existence continued preserves it the same individual under the same denomination.

1 And this is what Locke means by 'a man.'
2 The nominalism of Locke, who is apt to make questions of this sort questions about the meaning of words only, appears in all this.
3 In the foregoing argument, Locke emphatically distinguishes the person from the man, and from the bodily substance. Should we not rather say that it is in his personality and personal agency that man finds what is deepest and truest in himself; and, by analogy, in the constitution of the universe? Locke, working from sensation upward, makes his Book of Ideas culminate in the complex idea of our concrete continuous personality, and in the moral relations to which persons ought to conform,—in this and the following chapter. Transcendental philosophy, from Descartes to Hegel, working from thought downward, ends by making abstract self-consciousness the key to the mysteries of existence.

By implication, Locke appears to make the idea of our personal existence a simple idea of reflection, which gives its meaning to the personal pronoun 'I,' in the 'perception' that I am. (Cf. Bk. IV. ch. ix.) The idea of our continuous personality, or personal identity, is a complex idea of relation between myself now and myself in the past, which 'terminates,' and is made concrete in actual consciousness, past and present. The identity of myself now with myself in the past; and my separateness from all that is not myself, in a private consciousness in which no other finite person can mingle, afford the unique experience of the spirit as distinguished from the mere animal in man. This experience of identical personal life and moral agency is thus the occasion of the most significant ideas in the human mind.

1 Our idea of 'personal identity' is with Locke our idea of a relation which arises under difference of time.
2 That is, the abstract relation can be embodied or made concrete only in phenomena of which we become aware through sensation or reflection.

1 Besides the before-mentioned occasions of time, place, and causality of comparing or referring things one to another, there are, as I have said, infinite others, some whereof I shall mention.

First, The first I shall name is some one simple idea, which, being capable of parts or degrees, affords an occasion of comparing the subjects wherein it is to one another, in respect of that simple idea, v. g. whiter, sweeter, equal, more, &c. These relations depending on the equality and excess of the same simple idea, in several subjects, may be called, if one will, proportional; and that these are only conversant about those simple ideas received from sensation or reflection is so evident that nothing need be said to evince it.

2 Secondly, Another occasion of comparing things together, or considering one thing, so as to include in that consideration some other thing, is the circumstances of their origin or beginning; which being not afterwards to be altered, make the relations depending thereon as lasting as the subjects to which they belong, v. g. father and son, brothers, cousins, &c., which have their relations by one community of blood, wherein they partake in several degrees: countrymen, i.e. those who were born in the same country or tract.