

JOHN LOCKE

From the painting at Christ Church, Oxford

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

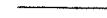
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BOOK I



*NEITHER PRINCIPLES NOR IDEAS ARE
INNATE*

SYNOPSIS OF THE FIRST BOOK.

THE First Book of the *Essay* is meant to open the way to Locke's account of the origin and history of human ideas, and the certain knowledge and probable presumptions to which they give rise,—by showing that men are born ignorant of everything. This is argued for on the grounds, (1) that there are no propositions, either speculative or practical, which are consciously received as true by every human being at birth; nor (2) even by all in whom reason is developed; (3) that to suppose aught to be innate in the mind, of which that mind is unconscious, involves a contradiction; (4) that although knowledge, when formed, is found to involve self-evident principles, their self-evidence does not prove (rather disproves) their innateness; and (5) that the hypothesis of their innateness is unnecessary, as the actual steps to knowledge and assent can be proved not to depend on our being born with a consciousness of the meaning and truth of any alleged innate principles. Moreover there could be no innate principles without innate ideas; but our ideas of identity, quantity, substance, and (above all) God, which (if any) must be innate, are plainly dependent on experience. The supposition of innate principles, thus at variance with facts and superfluous, has come into vogue because it 'eases the lazy from the pains of search,' and stops inquiry concerning all that is thus accepted, so that it becomes 'the principle of principles, that innate principles must not be questioned.'

CHAPTER I.

NO INNATE SPECULATIVE PRINCIPLES.

1. IT is an established opinion amongst some men¹, that there are in the understanding certain *innate principles*; some primary notions, *κοινὰ ἔννοιαι*, characters, as it were stamped upon the mind of man; which the soul receives in its very first being, and brings into the world with it². It would be

CHAP. I.

The way shown how we come by any

¹ Locke does not name the 'men' of 'innate principles' whose 'opinion' he proceeds to criticise; nor does he quote their words in evidence of what they intended by the opinion. He says (ch. ii. § 15) that after he had argued out objections to the 'established opinion,' his attention was directed to the arguments in its defence in the *De Veritate* of Lord Herbert, which thereupon he proceeds to controvert. From the first, Descartes, with whose writings he was early familiar, was probably in his view. According to Descartes there are three sources of ideas: 'Entre ces idées, les unes semblent être nées avec moi; les autres être étrangères et venir de dehors; et les autres être faites et inventées par moi-même.' (*Méd.* iii. 7.) But even the 'idées nées avec moi' of Descartes were not regarded by him as in consciousness until 'experience' had evoked them from latency—a position which Locke's argument always fails to reach. Though Locke nowhere names More, Hale, or Cudworth, he might have found expressions of theirs which, on a superficial view, appear to countenance the sort of innateness which he attributes to the 'established opinion.' See Hume's *Inquiry concerning Human Understand-*

ing, in Note A, on 'innate ideas,' and Locke's 'loose sense of the word idea.'

² The impossibility of resolving the intellectual necessities, which govern and constitute knowledge and existence, into transitory data of sense; or of explaining, by means of nature and its evolutions, the spiritual elements in human experience, which connect man with the supernatural, the infinite, the divine—has suggested that those elements, presupposed by experience, must have been *innate*, or born with the mind; thus potentially belonging to it, antecedently to all acquired knowledge. This hypothesis has found expression in many forms; and it has waxed or waned, as the spiritual or the sensuous was most developed in the consciousness of the philosopher or of the age. Locke assails it in its crudest form, in which it is countenanced by no eminent advocate; according to which the ideas and principles which ultimately constitute knowledge are supposed to be held *consciously*, from birth, or even before it, in every human mind, being thus 'stamped' on us from the beginning, and 'brought into the world' with us. It is easy to refute this; for it can be shown that there are no principles of which all men are aware as soon

CHAP. I.
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 Know-
 ledge,
 sufficient
 to prove it
 not innate.

sufficient to convince unprejudiced readers of the falseness of this supposition, if I should only show (as I hope I shall in the following parts of this Discourse) how men, barely by the use of their natural faculties¹, may attain to all the knowledge they have, without the help of any innate impressions; and may arrive at certainty, without any such original notions or principles. For I imagine any one will easily grant that it would be impertinent to suppose the ideas of colours innate in a creature to whom God hath given sight, and a power to receive them by the eyes from external objects: and no less unreasonable would it be to attribute several truths to the impressions of nature, and innate characters, when we may observe in ourselves faculties fit to attain as easy and certain knowledge of them as if they were originally imprinted on the mind.

But because a man is not permitted without censure to follow his own thoughts in the search of truth, when they lead him ever so little out of the common road², I shall set down the reasons that made me doubt of the truth of that opinion, as an excuse for my mistake, if I be in one; which I leave to be considered by those who, with me, dispose themselves to embrace truth wherever they find it.

General
 Assent the
 great
 Argument.

2. There is nothing more commonly³ taken for granted than that there are certain *principles*, both *speculative* and *practical*, (for they speak of both), universally agreed upon by all mankind: which therefore, they argue, must needs be

as they are born, or even in which all mankind are agreed when they are adult. That data of experience are needed, to awaken what must otherwise be the slumbering potentialities of man's spiritual being; and that human knowledge is the issue of sense when sense is combined with latent intellect, is an interpretation of the 'established opinion,' which Locke does not fairly contemplate.

¹ Locke recognises the *innateness* of 'faculties' in calling them 'natural'; but without examining whether any, and if so what, ideas and judgments

are (consciously or unconsciously) presupposed in a rational exercise of the innate faculties.

² 'Originally imprinted,' and which therefore, he concludes, must have been present consciously from the first, before our faculties were exercised in experience.

³ This dogma of the conscious innateness of certain principles, or 'maxims,' is represented as the 'common road'; departure from which seems to Locke to give his *Essay* that air of 'novelty' to which he so often refers.

CHAP. I.
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the constant impressions¹ which the souls of men receive in their first beings, and which they bring into the world with them, as necessarily and really as they do any of their inherent faculties.

3. This argument, drawn from universal consent, has this misfortune in it, that if it were true in matter of fact, that there were certain truths wherein all mankind agreed, it would not prove them innate, if there can be any other way shown how men may come to that universal agreement, in the things they do consent in, which I presume may be done².

4. But, which is worse, this argument of universal consent, which is made use of to prove innate principles, seems to me a demonstration that there are none such: because there are none to which all mankind give an universal assent. I shall begin with the speculative, and instance in those magnified principles of demonstration, 'Whatsoever is, is,' and 'It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be'; which, of all others, I think have the most allowed title to innate³.

Universal
 Consent
 proves
 nothing
 innate.

'What is,
 is,' and 'It
 is impos-
 sible for
 the same
 Thing to
 be and not
 to be,' not
 univer-
 sally as-
 sented to.

¹ 'Constant impressions,' i. e. of which there is a conscious impression in all human beings from birth, and about which all, even infants and idiots, are agreed.

² Conscious consent on the part of every human being cannot be alleged on behalf of any abstract principle, as Locke is easily able to show. There is no proposition which some one has not been found to deny. A better criterion of the supernatural or divine, in man and in the universe, than this of 'universal consent,' which Locke makes so much of, is found, when it is shown,—that the full and adequate exercise of our faculties in experience necessarily presupposes principles of which the mass of mankind may be only dimly conscious, or wholly unconscious. Locke ignores the main issue; and when he explains his meaning is found nearer than he supposes to those who hold the innateness of reason in experience.

He acknowledges innateness of faculty. Also that knowledge involves and is based upon what is self-evident is a prominent lesson of the Fourth Book. 'That there can be any knowledge without self-evident propositions,' he assures Stillingfleet that he is so far from denying, 'that I am accused by your lordship for requiring more such in demonstration than you think necessary' (*Third Letter*, p. 264). 'I contend for the usefulness and necessity of self-evident propositions in all certainty, whether of intuition or demonstration' (p. 286). 'I make self-evident propositions necessary to certainty, and found all knowledge or certainty in them' (p. 340).

³ These two, called by logicians the principles of *identity* and of *contradiction*, are again treated of in Bk. IV. ch. vii, where his distinction between *consciousness of them at birth*, which he denies, and the *gradual discovery*

CHAP. I. These have so settled a reputation of maxims universally received, that it will no doubt be thought strange if any one should seem to question it. But yet I take liberty to say, that these propositions are so far from having an universal assent, that there are a great part of mankind to whom they are not so much as known.

5. For, first, it is evident, that all children and idiots have not the least apprehension or thought of them. And the want of that is enough to destroy that universal assent¹ which must needs be the necessary concomitant of all innate truths: it seeming to me near a contradiction to say, that there are truths imprinted on the soul, which it perceives or understands not: imprinting, if it signify anything, being nothing else but the making certain truths to be perceived. For to imprint anything on the mind without the mind's perceiving it, seems to me hardly intelligible. If therefore children and idiots have souls, have minds, with those impressions upon them, *they* must unavoidably perceive them, and necessarily know and assent to these truths; which since they do not, it is evident that there are no such impressions. For if they are not notions naturally imprinted, how can they be innate? and if they are notions imprinted, how can they be unknown? To say a notion is imprinted on the mind, and yet at the same time to say, that the mind is ignorant of it, and never yet took notice of it, is to make this impression nothing. No proposition can be said to be in the mind which it never yet knew, which it was never yet conscious of². For if any one may, then, by the same

of their self-evidence, which he recognises, is illustrated. The second of the two is the axiom of axioms with Aristotle, itself indemonstrable because presupposed in all proof.

¹ 'Assent,' i. e. actual or conscious, not potential or unconscious, although the whole question turns upon the latter. In Bk. IV. he confines 'assent' to judgments of probability exclusively, thus contrasting it with 'knowledge' or absolute certainty.

² The argument in this section assumes that ideas cannot be held men-

tally in a latent or unconscious state, that there cannot be impressions made on the mind without accompanying consciousness of them, a mental impression and a consciousness of it being regarded as identical. That there may be *conditions*, implied in the constitution of reason, to which our ideas, when they do emerge in consciousness, must conform, by necessity of reason, is a conception foreign to his view. Locke argues that no idea can be said to be 'in the mind' of which that mind is not either actually

reason, all propositions that are true, and the mind is capable ever of assenting to, may be said to be in the mind, and to be imprinted: since, if any one can be said to be in the mind, which it never yet knew, it must be only because it is capable of knowing it; and so the mind is of all truths it ever shall know. Nay, thus truths may be imprinted on the mind which it never did, nor ever shall know; for a man may live long, and die at last in ignorance of many truths which his mind was capable of knowing¹, and that with certainty. So that if the capacity of knowing be the natural impression contended for, all the truths a man ever comes to know will, by this account, be every one of them innate; and this great point will amount to no more, but only to a very improper way of speaking; which, whilst it pretends to assert the contrary, says nothing different from those who deny innate principles. For nobody, I think, ever denied that the mind was capable of knowing several truths. The capacity, they say, is innate; the knowledge acquired. But then to what end such contest for certain innate maxims? If truths can be imprinted on the understanding without being perceived, I can see no difference there can be between any truths the mind is *capable* of knowing in respect of their original: they must all be innate or all adventitious: in vain shall a man go about to distinguish them². He therefore that talks of innate notions in the understanding, cannot (if he intend thereby any distinct sort of truths) mean such truths to be in the understanding as it never perceived, and is yet wholly ignorant of. For if these words 'to be in the understanding' have any propriety, they signify to be understood. So that to be in the understanding, and not to be understood; to be in the mind and never to be perceived, is all one as to say

percipient, or through memory capable of becoming percipient.

¹ Locke never asks, as Kant afterwards did, what this 'capacity,' which he allows to be latent or innate, necessarily implies.

² Not so; if the primitive necessities which constitute reason in us and in the universe can be distinguished by marks from the empirical generalisa-

tions of sense, and from generalised sense data. Not so; if there are ideas (concepts) which, by an intellectual necessity, on certain occasions in experience, form themselves in us, without our forming them by tentative generalisation. The question still remains—What does a capability of having experience imply?

Not on the Mind naturally imprinted, because not known to Children, Idiots, &c.

CHAP. I.

CHAP. I. anything is and is not in the mind or understanding. If
 therefore these two propositions, 'Whatsoever is, is,' and 'It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be,' are by nature imprinted, children cannot be ignorant of them: infants, and all that have souls, must necessarily have them in their understandings, know the truth of them, and assent to it¹.

That men know them when they come to the Use of Reason answered. 6. To avoid this, it is usually answered, that all men know and assent to them, *when they come to the use of reason*²; and this is enough to prove them innate. I answer:

7. Doubtful expressions, that have scarce any signification, go for clear reasons to those who, being prepossessed, take not the pains to examine even what they themselves say. For, to apply this answer with any tolerable sense to our present purpose, it must signify one of these two things: either that as soon as men come to the use of reason these supposed native inscriptions come to be known and observed by them; or else, that the use and exercise of men's reason, assists them in the discovery of these principles, and certainly makes them known to them.

If Reason discovered them, that would not prove them innate. 8. If they mean, that by the use of reason men may discover these principles, and that this is sufficient to prove them innate; their way of arguing will stand thus, viz. that whatever truths reason can certainly discover to us, and make us firmly assent to, those are all naturally imprinted on the mind; since that universal assent, which is made the mark of them, amounts to no more but this,—that by the use of reason we are capable to come to a certain knowledge³ of and assent to them; and, by this means, there will be no

¹ Universal consent may mean that any who do think such propositions intelligently *must* think them in one and the same way; not that every human being does in fact think them with conscious intelligence. In any other meaning universal consent could be no criterion of reason being innate or latent in us, and in the universe; for there are no propositions to which all human beings, including infants, give conscious consent.

² Locke often uses 'reason' for reasoning; so here he means, when they come to the conscious use of the deductive faculty, which elicits previously unknown propositions from those already known.

³ 'Knowledge' and 'assent,' here used convertibly, are in Bk. IV distinguished emphatically—self-evidence and demonstrable evidence constituting knowledge, while assent is determined by weighing probabilities.

CHAP. I. difference between the maxims of the mathematicians, and theorems they deduce from them: all must be equally allowed innate¹; they being all discoveries made by the use of reason, and truths that a rational creature may certainly come to know, if he apply his thoughts rightly that way.

9. But how can these men think the use of reason necessary to discover principles that are supposed innate, when reason (if we may believe them) is nothing else but the faculty of deducing unknown truths from principles or propositions that are already known? That certainly can never be thought innate which we have need of reason to discover; unless, as I have said, we will have all the certain truths that reason ever teaches us, to be innate². We may as well think the use of reason necessary to make our eyes discover visible objects, as that there should be need of reason, or the exercise thereof, to make the understanding see what is originally engraven on it, and cannot be in the understanding before it be perceived by it. So that to make reason discover those truths thus imprinted, is to say, that the use of reason discovers to a man what he knew before: and if men have those innate impressed truths originally, and before the use of reason, and yet are always ignorant of them till they come to the use of reason, it is in effect to say, that men know and know them not at the same time³.

10. It will here perhaps be said that mathematical demonstrations, and other truths that are not innate, are not assented to as soon as proposed, wherein they are distinguished from these maxims and other innate truths. I shall have occasion

¹ As Leibniz held, who argued that all arithmetic and all geometry are virtually innate, and may (with effort) be found in the mind; as Plato showed when he made Socrates oblige a child to admit abstract truths without telling him anything. The innate knowledge of Plato and Leibniz is characterised, not by its independence of, and priority to, mental development in the individual, but by its intuited necessity and universality *after* it has been awakened into consciousness, in the

exercise of intuitive and discursive reason.

² Not so; if the criterion of innateness is sought, not in the process, but in the intellectual characteristics of the product.

³ The unconscious presence of principles which can be proved (by philosophical analysis) to be virtually presupposed in our certainties, and even in our assent to probability, is here overlooked.

CHAP. I. to speak of assent upon the first proposing, more particularly by and by. I shall here only, and that very readily, allow, that these maxims and mathematical demonstrations are in this different: that the one have need of reason, using of proofs, to make them out and to gain our assent; but the other, as soon as understood, are, without any the least reasoning, embraced and assented to¹. But I withal beg leave to observe, that it lays open the weakness of this subterfuge, which requires the use of reason² for the discovery of these general truths: since it must be confessed that in their discovery there is no use made of reasoning at all. And I think those who give this answer will not be forward to affirm that the knowledge of this maxim, 'That it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be,' is a deduction of our reason. For this would be to destroy that bounty of nature they seem so fond of, whilst they make the knowledge of those principles to depend on the labour of our thoughts. For all reasoning³ is search, and casting about, and requires pains and application. And how can it with any tolerable sense be supposed, that what was imprinted by nature, as the foundation and guide of our reason, should need the use of reason to discover it?

And if there were this would prove them not innate.

11. Those who will take the pains to reflect with a little attention on the operations of the understanding, will find that this ready assent of the mind to⁴ some truths, depends not, either on native inscription, or the use of reason, but on a faculty of the mind quite distinct from both of them, as we shall see hereafter⁵. Reason, therefore, having nothing to do

¹ That is, they are self-evidently true, but not what Locke means by innate; for he here argues that self-evidence in a principle is no proof of its innateness.

² 'Reason,' i. e. reasoning, which is not needed for discovering the truth of self-evident mathematical axioms.

³ On the contrary, philosophical reasoning and analysis are needed for quickening into distinct consciousness, in their abstract form, those conscious principles of reason which are logically presupposed in all reasoning and infer-

ence. This must in the nature of the case be posterior, not anterior, to the exercise of intellect in experience.

⁴ Rather *intellectual necessity to perceive*, of which only the developed intelligence becomes conscious. 'Assent' here again used for rational perception, instead of the presumed probability to which the term is confined in Bk. IV.

⁵ Cf. Bk. IV. ch. ii. § 1; ch. vii. § 19; ch. xvii. §§ 14, 17, in which the truths referred to are shown to be 'perceived at first sight, by bare intuition,' as soon as the mind, sufficiently educated to per-

in procuring our assent to these maxims, if by saying, that 'men know and assent to them, when they come to the use of reason,' be meant, that the use of reason assists us in the knowledge of these maxims, it is utterly false; and were it true, would prove them not to be innate. CHAP. I.

12. If by knowing and assenting to them 'when we come to the use of reason,' be meant, that this is the time when they come to be taken notice of by the mind¹; and that as soon as children come to the use of reason, they come also to know and assent to these maxims; this also is false and frivolous. First, it is false; because it is evident these maxims are not in the mind so early as the use of reason; and therefore the coming to the use of reason is falsely assigned as the time of their discovery. How many instances of the use of reason may we observe in children, a long time before they have any knowledge of this maxim, 'That it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be?' And a great part of illiterate people and savages pass many years, even of their rational age, without ever thinking on this and the like general propositions. I grant, men come not to the knowledge of these general and more abstract truths, which are thought innate, till they come to the use of reason; and I add, nor then neither. Which is so, because, till after they come to the use of reason, those general abstract ideas are not framed in the mind, about which those general maxims are, which are mistaken for innate principles, but are indeed discoveries made and verities introduced and brought into the mind by the same way, and discovered by the same steps, as several other propositions, which nobody was ever so extravagant as to suppose innate². This I hope to make

The coming to the Use of Reason not the Time we come to know these Maxims.

ceive them, 'turns its view that way.' Truths thus *intuited* (not inferred) are there presented by Locke as the foundation of 'all the certainty and evidence of all our knowledge'—as 'known by a superior and higher evidence than reasoning,' and generalisation by calculated experiments. They are at first apprehended as embodied in concrete instances, and then in their abstract expression.

¹ That is, if their being 'innate' means, as with Locke it does, that we were all born with a conscious knowledge of them, and in their abstract expression too; his own fundamental principle being, that we are born destitute of all knowledge and belief, so that his task is, to show how we gradually acquire more or less of both.

² Though it is only gradually, and by dint of abstract thinking, that the

CHAP. I. plain in the sequel of this Discourse. I allow therefore, a necessity that men should come to the use of reason before they get the knowledge of those general truths; but deny that men's coming to the use of reason is the time of their discovery.

By this they are not distinguished from other knowable Truths.

13. In the mean time it is observable, that this saying, that men know and assent to these maxims 'when they come to the use of reason,' amounts in reality of fact to no more but this,—that they are never known nor taken notice of before the use of reason, but may possibly be assented to some time after, during a man's life; but when is uncertain. And so may all other knowable truths, as well as these; which therefore have no advantage nor distinction from others by this note of being known when we come to the use of reason¹; nor are thereby proved to be innate, but quite the contrary.

If coming to the Use of Reason

14. But, secondly, were it true that the precise time of their being known and assented to² were, when men come to

conscious apprehension of those abstract axioms of identity and contradiction is reached, in the individual mind,—yet when one does realise them, it is with a sense of their absolute intellectual necessity, which is wanting in the case of tentative inductions from experience. And this it is that makes them be regarded as somehow innate in the reason that is also innate in things, thus making real inference, deductive and inductive, possible.

¹ Their 'note' is not properly alleged to consist in their becoming known as soon as one comes to the use of reason; for they are to be tested by the fact that, as soon as there is consciousness of them, there is an involved perception of their *absolute necessity*,—in contrast to the *conditional necessity* of generalisations which depend merely upon the custom of experience.

² Throughout this whole argument it is forgotten that in this matter the question of interest in philosophy is

not one of *time* at all,—not of *when* individuals become aware of what, if apprehended, is seen to be self-evidently true. The philosophical question about innateness, as Shaftesbury well puts it, really is—'whether the constitution of man be such that, *being adult and grown up*,' certain ideas do not '*infallibly and necessarily* spring up in consciousness.' And Locke grants this when he replies,—that 'there are certain propositions which, *though the soul from the beginning, when a man is born, does not* [consciously] know, yet, by assistance from the outward senses, and the help of some previous cultivation, it may afterwards come self-evidently, or with a demonstrable necessity, to know the truth of, is no more than what I have affirmed in my First Book.' Innateness, as argued by Locke, means original *conscious* possession of such truths, without the laborious intellectual effort that must be put forth before they are recognised in their philosophical abstraction.

CHAP. I. the use of reason; neither would that prove them innate. This way of arguing is as frivolous as the supposition itself is false. For, by what kind of logic will it appear that any notion is originally by nature imprinted in the mind in its first constitution, because it comes first to be observed and assented to when a faculty of the mind, which has quite a distinct province, begins to exert itself? And therefore the coming to the use of speech, if it were supposed the time that these maxims are first assented to, (which it may be with as much truth as the time when men come to the use of reason,) would be as good a proof that they were innate, as to say they are innate because men assent to them when they come to the use of reason. I agree then with these men of innate principles, that there is no knowledge of these general and self-evident maxims¹ in the mind, till it comes to the exercise of reason: but I deny that the coming to the use of reason is the precise time when they are first taken notice of; and if that were the precise time, I deny that it would prove them innate. All that can with any truth be meant by this proposition, that men 'assent to them when they come to the use of reason,' is no more but this,—that the making of general abstract ideas, and the understanding of general names, being a concomitant of the rational faculty, and growing up with it, children commonly get not those general ideas, nor learn the names that stand for them, till, having for a good while exercised their reason about familiar and more particular ideas, they are, by their ordinary discourse and actions with others, acknowledged to be capable of rational conversation². If assenting to these maxims, when

It is the need for this effort that he wants to show. He is really arguing, throughout the First Book, for the exercise of individual judgment, and against blind submission to dogmas. Hume hardly sees this when he pronounces the discussion 'frivolous, if by innate Locke meant contemporary to our birth; nor is it worth while to inquire at what time thinking begins, whether before, at, or after our birth.' (*Inquiry*, Note A.)

¹ He still refers indefinitely to 'these men of innate principles.' Here, too, the very maxims that are denied to be 'innate' are expressly called 'self-evident.'

² The axioms of identity and contradiction, which Locke takes as his examples of speculative principles alleged to be consciously innate, are of all others the most abstract, and therefore among the latest, to be recognised by the mind, which must nevertheless

CHAP. I. were the Time of their Discovery, it would not prove them innate.

CHAP. I. men come to the use of reason, can be true in any other sense, I desire it may be shown; or at least, how in this, or any other sense, it proves them innate.

The Steps by which the Mind
15. The senses at first let in *particular* ideas, and furnish the yet empty cabinet¹, and the mind by degrees growing

have always virtually assumed their truth. It is this *unconscious assumption* that his opponents offer, as evidence of the principles named being 'universally' assented to,—in a potential or implied assent.

¹ In this and the two following sentences Locke anticipates his own account, in the Second Book, of the origin and elaboration of *ideas*, which 'are all at first particular,' their generalisations being moreover only 'accidental.' The 'empty cabinet' represents the mind before its latent faculties have been quickened into exercise in experience. The 'sheet of blank paper' and the 'waxed tablet' are misleading metaphors, which, after Aristotle and others, he elsewhere employs. In his endeavour to emphasise the difference between the continuous effort involved in the formation of *human* knowledge, and the perfect knowledge eternally present in the *Supreme Mind*,—thus enforcing his favourite lesson of an active private judgment in man,—he fails to see that to attribute to human knowledge innate elements, and also data of experience, is not contradictory, since all knowledge may involve *both* elements. But Locke might have unconsciously in view what his favourite Hooker thus expresses:—'In the matter of knowledge there is between the angels of God and the children of men this difference:—angels already have full and complete knowledge in the highest degree that can be imparted to them; men, if we view them in their spring, are at first without understanding or knowledge at all. Nevertheless, from this utter vacuity, they grow by degrees, till they come at length to be even as

the angels themselves are. That which agreeth to the one *now*, the other shall attain unto *in the end*; they are not so far disjoined and severed but that they come at length to meet. The soul of *man* being therefore *at the first as a book wherein nothing is, and yet all things may be imprinted*, we are to search by what steps and degrees it riseth into perfection of knowledge' (*Eccles. Polit. Bk. I. § 6*). Leibniz takes the analogy of the marble to illustrate the latent presence in experience of ideas and principles which are influential without being recognised:—'Je me suis servi aussi de la comparaison d'une pierre de marbre qui a des veines plutôt que d'une pierre de marbre tout unie ou de tablettes vides, c'est-à-dire de ce qui s'appelle *tabula rasa* chez les philosophes. Car si l'âme ressemblait à ces tablettes vides, les vérités seraient en nous comme la figure d'Hercule est dans un marbre quand le marbre est tout à fait indifférent à recevoir ou cette figure ou quelque autre. Mais s'il y avait des veines dans la pierre qui marquassent la figure d'Hercule préférablement à d'autres figures, cette pierre y serait plus déterminée, et Hercule y serait comme inné en quelque façon, quoiqu'il fallût du travail pour découvrir ces veines, et pour les nettoyer par la polissure, en retranchant ce qui les empêche de paraître. C'est ainsi que les idées et les vérités nous sont innées, comme des inclinations, des dispositions, des habitudes, ou des virtualités naturelles, et non pas comme des actions; quoique ces virtualités soient toujours accompagnées de quelques actions, souvent insensibles, qui y répondent.' (*Nouveaux Essais, Avant Propos.*)

familiar with some of them, they are lodged in the memory, and names got to them. Afterwards, the mind proceeding further, abstracts them, and by degrees learns the use of general names¹. In this manner the mind comes to be furnished with ideas and language, the *materials* about which to exercise its discursive faculty. And the use of reason becomes daily more visible, as these materials that give it employment increase². But though the having of general ideas and the use of general words and reason usually grow together, yet I see not how this any way proves them innate. The knowledge of some truths, I confess, is very early in the mind; but in a way that shows them not to be innate. For, if we will observe, we shall find it still to be about ideas, not innate, but acquired; it being about those first which are imprinted by external things, with which infants have earliest to do, which make the most frequent impressions on their senses³. In ideas thus got, the mind discovers that some agree and others differ, probably as soon as it has any use of memory; as soon as it is able to retain and perceive distinct ideas. But whether it be then or no, this is certain, it does so long before it has the use of words; or comes to that which we commonly call 'the use of reason.' For a child knows as certainly before it can speak the difference between the ideas of sweet and bitter (i.e. that sweet is not bitter), as it knows afterwards (when it comes to speak) that wormwood and sugarplums are not the same thing⁴.

¹ The process of human experience is here described as presenting three stages—perception or acquisition, retention, and elaboration of its material.

² But the intellectual authority of a principle when evolved does not depend upon its natural genesis or evolution. That a judgment should arise in one's consciousness *under natural law* does not disprove its intrinsic necessity and universality, which reflective analysis may detect after it has thus arisen.

³ 'Les idées qui viennent des sens,' says Leibniz, 'sont confuses, et les vérités qui en dépendent le sont aussi,

au moins en partie; au lieu que les idées intellectuelles, et les vérités qui en dépendent sont distinctes, et ni les unes ni les autres n'ont point leur origine des sens; quoiqu'il soit vrai que nous n'y penserions jamais sans les sens.' (*Nouv. Ess. I. i.*)

⁴ That 'sweet is not bitter' involves recognition, in data of sense, of the abstract principle, that it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be 'at the same time.' It is true that this concrete embodiment of it in a particular example is more evident to an uneducated mind than the highly abstract maxim or axiom which

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Assent to supposed innate truths depends on having clear and distinct ideas of what their terms mean, and not on their innateness.

16. A child knows not that three and four are equal to seven, till he comes to be able to count seven, and has got the name and idea of equality; and then, upon explaining those words, he presently assents to, or rather perceives the truth of that proposition. But neither does he then readily assent because it is an innate truth, nor was his assent wanting till then because he wanted the use of reason; but the truth of it appears to him as soon as he has settled in his mind the clear and distinct ideas that these names stand for. And then he knows the truth of that proposition upon the same grounds and by the same means, that he knew before that a rod and a cherry are not the same thing; and upon the same grounds also that he may come to know afterwards 'That it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be,' as shall be more fully shown hereafter¹. So that the later it is before any one comes to have those general ideas about which those maxims are; or to know the signification of those general terms that stand for them; or to put together in his mind the ideas they stand for; the later also will it be before he comes to assent to those maxims;—whose terms, with the ideas they stand for, being no more innate than those of a cat or a weasel, he must stay till time and observation have acquainted him with them; and then he will be in a capacity to know the truth of these maxims, upon the first occasion that shall make him put together those ideas in his mind², and observe whether they agree or disagree, according as is expressed in those propositions. And therefore it is that a man knows that eighteen and nineteen are equal to thirty-seven, by the same self-evidence that he knows one and two to be equal to three: yet a child knows this not so soon as the other; not for want of the use of reason, but because the ideas the words eighteen,

the embodiment logically presupposes, when its principle remains unexpressed in words or in consciousness, like an unexpressed premiss in ordinary reasoning.

¹ In Bk. IV. ch. ii. § 1, and ch. vii. § 9, as well as in other places, the need of time, and the active continuous exercise of our faculties, as con-

ditions indispensable to a conscious intuition of the self-evidence of these and other truths, are insisted on.

² They are thus distinguished from inductive generalisations, which presuppose calculated observations, and after all are only probabilities that may be modified by unexpected conditions.

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nineteen, and thirty-seven stand for, are not so soon got, as those which are signified by one, two, and three¹.

17. This evasion therefore of general assent when men come to the use of reason, failing as it does, and leaving no difference between those supposed innate and other truths that are afterwards acquired and learnt, men have endeavoured to secure an universal assent to those they call maxims³, by saying, they are generally assented to as soon as proposed, and the terms they are proposed in understood: seeing all men, even children, as soon as they hear and understand the terms, assent to these propositions, they think it is sufficient to prove them innate. For, since men never fail after they have once understood the words, to acknowledge them for undoubted truths, they would infer, that certainly these propositions were first lodged in the understanding, which, without any teaching, the mind, at the very first proposal, immediately closes with and assents to, and after that never doubts again.

18. In answer to this, I demand whether ready assent given to a proposition, upon first hearing and understanding the terms, be a certain mark of an innate principle⁴? If it be not, such a general assent is in vain urged as a proof of them: if it be said that it is a mark of innate, they must then allow all such propositions to be innate which are generally assented to as soon as heard, whereby they will find themselves plentifully stored with innate principles. For upon the same ground,

¹ And until the 'ideas' are got, the judgments into which they enter cannot be formed; while, on the other hand, *mere idea* (as the term is understood by Locke) cannot be regarded as knowledge, as long as it is viewed in abstraction from *judgment*, which is the unit of knowledge and belief.

² No 'difference' in the time at which the individual consciously recognises and accepts them. But this is quite consistent with difference in the intellectual character of the acceptance, in each case when it does take place, as Locke allows in the next sentence.

³ Cf. Bk. IV. ch. vii.

⁴ In what follows there is still failure to distinguish between the later philosophical analysis, in which the mind consciously discerns, as necessarily true, abstract principles which are logically presupposed in knowledge and assent, and the earlier unconscious proceeding upon those principles. Also we must distinguish between the innumerable concrete examples in which self-evident truths are embodied, and the abstract philosophical expression of the same truths.

CHAP. I. viz. of assent at first hearing and understanding the terms, that men would have those maxims pass for innate, they must also admit several propositions about numbers to be innate; and thus, that one and two are equal to three, that two and two are equal to four, and a multitude of other the like propositions in numbers, that everybody assents to at first hearing and understanding the terms, must have a place amongst these innate axioms. Nor is this the prerogative of numbers alone, and propositions made about several of them; but even natural philosophy, and all the other sciences, afford propositions which are sure to meet with assent as soon as they are understood. That 'two bodies cannot be in the same place' is a truth that nobody any more sticks at than at these maxims, that 'it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be,' that 'white is not black,' that 'a square is not a circle,' that 'bitterness is not sweetness¹.' These and a million of such other propositions, as many at least as we have distinct ideas of, every man in his wits, at first hearing, and knowing what the names stand for, must necessarily assent to². If these men will be true to their own rule, and have assent at first hearing and understanding the terms to be a mark of innate, they must allow not only as many innate propositions as men have distinct ideas, but as many as men can make propositions wherein different ideas are denied one of another. Since every proposition wherein one different idea is denied of another, will as certainly find assent at first hearing and understanding the terms as this general one, 'It is impossible

ness, and a thousand the like, must be innate.

¹ The proposition, *the sweet is not the bitter*, is not innate, says Leibniz, according to the proper meaning of the term innate truth. 'Car les sentiments de *doux* et de *l'amer* viennent des sens externes. Ainsi c'est un conclusion *melée (hybrida conclusio)*, ou l'axiome est appliqué à une vérité sensible' (*Nouv. Ess.*).

² Again, he contrasts self-evident maxims with empirical generalisations, while denying that the former are 'innate,' because, on the one hand, not patent in the consciousness of all,

and, on the other hand, incapable of being latent, inasmuch as for the mind to possess an idea or a principle of which it is unconscious is assumed to be a contradiction in terms. Here Leibniz asks, why, since acquired knowledge may, as Locke acknowledges, be latent in *memory*,—why may not nature have in like manner included in the primary constitution of the mind ideas on which the constitution of knowledge necessarily depends? For a reference to memory cf. ch. iii, § 20.

for the same thing to be and not to be,' or that which is the foundation of it. and is the easier understood of the two, 'The same is not different'; by which account they will have legions of innate propositions of this one sort, without mentioning any other¹. But, since no proposition can be innate unless the *ideas* about which it is be innate, this will be to suppose all our ideas of colours, sounds, tastes, figure, &c., innate, than which there cannot be anything more opposite to reason and experience². Universal and ready assent upon hearing and understanding the terms is, I grant, a mark of self-evidence; but self-evidence, depending not on innate impressions, but on something else, (as we shall show hereafter³.) belongs to several propositions which nobody was yet so extravagant as to pretend to be innate.

19. Nor let it be said, that those more particular self-evident propositions, which are assented to at first hearing, as that 'one and two are equal to three,' that 'green is not red,' &c., are received as the consequences of those more universal propositions which are looked on as innate principles; since any one, who will but take the pains to observe what passes in the understanding, will certainly find that these, and the like less general propositions, are certainly known, and firmly assented to by those who are utterly ignorant of those more general maxims; and so, being earlier in the mind than those (as they are called) first⁴ principles, cannot owe

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¹ As Leibniz says, all arithmetic and all geometry are virtually innate or in the mind.

² There is here again confusion of the perceived truth of an intellectual principle in its most abstract form, and perception of the truth of propositions which ultimately depend upon it, as well as perception of its variable and contingent embodiments. This is further exaggerated by Hume, when he asserts that, 'if innate be equivalent to natural, then all the perceptions and ideas of the mind must be allowed to be innate' (*Inquiry*, Note A)—at least if this be taken in the sense Hume seems to intend.

³ Cf. Bk. IV. ch. ii. § 1, &c. Again, so far from identifying them in a common condemnation, he contrasts 'innate' and 'self-evident'—rejecting innateness of knowledge, because 'we are all born ignorant of everything'; and arguing for self-evidence, as that on which all the certainty of all our knowledge ultimately depends, and which, in the intellectually awakened mind, is 'perceived' as the eye perceives light, only by being directed towards it.

⁴ But they are not 'first' because *soonest* apprehended by the individual mind, but because presupposed in the nature of things, or in reason, and so *first in logical order*.

Such less general Propositions known before these universal Maxims.

to them the assent wherewith they are received at first hearing¹.

One and one equal to Two, &c., not general nor useful answered.

20. If it be said, that these propositions, viz. 'two and two are equal to four,' 'red is not blue,' &c., are not general maxims, nor of any great use, I answer, that makes nothing to the argument of universal assent upon hearing and understanding. For, if that be the certain mark of innate, whatever proposition can be found that receives general assent as soon as heard and understood, that must be admitted for an innate proposition, as well as this maxim, 'That it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be,' they being upon this ground equal. And as to the difference of being more general, that makes this maxim more remote from being innate²; those general and abstract ideas being more strangers to our first apprehensions than those of more particular self-evident propositions; and therefore it is longer before they are admitted and assented to by the growing³ understanding. And as to the usefulness of these magnified maxims, that perhaps will not be found so great as is generally conceived, when it comes in its due place to be more fully considered⁴.

These Maxims not being known sometimes till proposed,

21. But we have not yet done with 'assenting to propositions at first hearing and understanding their terms.' It is fit we first take notice that this, instead of being a mark that they are innate, is a proof of the contrary; since it supposes that several, who understand and know other things, are ignorant

¹ Notwithstanding, the 'more general' are so presupposed logically in the less general and particular propositions, that the former (though often only latent or unconsciously held) could not be denied without involving denial of the latter. We rest on them as we rest on suppressed sumptions in enthymemes, in which the force of the conclusion is determined by what is suppressed or latent.

² In Locke's meaning of innateness or apriority.

³ That a human understanding of the innate, or of any part of it, must be a growth,—the issue of labour and a tentative experience, and that

none of it is born with us, is the lesson intended by Locke in this controversy against innate ideas and principles.

⁴ See Bk. IV. ch. vii. The reason of the less general truths is found in the more abstract, and in that sense the more simple, which, as Leibniz puts it, are in us virtually and before all apperception. Yet they form the soul and tissue of our knowledge, being as necessary to it as the muscles and sinews are for walking, though we may not actually think of either, and do not distinguish them by abstraction till we have become philosophical.

of these principles till they are proposed to them; and that one may be unacquainted with these truths till he hears them from others. For, if they were innate, what need they be proposed in order to gaining assent, when, by being in the understanding, by a natural and original impression, (if there were any such,) they could not but be known before? Or doth the proposing them print them clearer in the mind than nature did? If so, then the consequence will be, that a man knows them better after he has been thus taught them than he did before. Whence it will follow that these principles may be made more evident to us by others' teaching¹ than nature has made them by impression: which will ill agree with the opinion of innate principles, and give but little authority to them; but, on the contrary, makes them unfit to be the foundations of all our other knowledge; as they are pretended to be. This cannot be denied, that men grow first acquainted with many of these self-evident truths upon their being proposed: but it is clear that whosoever does so, finds in himself that he then begins to know a proposition, which he knew not before, and which from thenceforth he never questions; not because it was innate, but because the consideration of the nature of the things contained in those words would not suffer him to think otherwise², how, or whensoever he is brought to reflect on them. [³ And if whatever is assented to at first hearing and understanding the terms must pass for an innate principle, every well-grounded observation, drawn from particulars into a general rule⁴, must be innate. When yet it is certain that

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proves them not innate.

¹ 'Assent when proposed' is here interpreted, assent on the ground of proposal by a person, i.e. deference to human authority, instead of rational insight by the person himself. This introduces a new and irrelevant question, about the rationale of authority. The question is, whether, when such judgments are *anyhow* brought into our consciousness, the supposition of their being false must not be seen by us to be necessarily absurd.

² Truths intellectually necessary or self-evident are here again opposed to innate truths, which Locke supposes

we must all be conscious of when we are born, if they are innate.

³ Added in Second Edition.

⁴ That is, every empirical generalisation formed by a sufficient induction, which Locke strongly distinguishes in Bk. IV. from self-evident and demonstrated truths. But is the *conditional* necessity which constrains an educated man to accept the law of gravitation of the same sort as the *absolute* intellectual necessity which constrains an educated man to accept the abstract principle of non-contradiction or of causality?

not all, but only sagacious heads, light at first on these observations, and reduce them into general propositions: not innate, but collected from a preceding acquaintance and reflection on particular instances. These, when observing men have made them, unobserving men, when they are proposed to them, cannot refuse their assent to.]

Implicitly known before proposing, signifies that the Mind is capable of understanding them, or else signifies nothing.

22. If it be said, the understanding hath an *implicit* knowledge of these principles, but not an *explicit*, before this first hearing (as they must who will say 'that they are in the understanding before they are known,') it will be hard to conceive what is meant by a principle imprinted on the understanding implicitly, unless it be this,—that the mind is capable of understanding and assenting firmly to such propositions. And thus all mathematical demonstrations, as well as first principles, must be received as native impressions on the mind; which I fear they will scarce allow them to be, who find it harder to demonstrate a proposition than assent to it when demonstrated. And few mathematicians will be forward to believe, that all the diagrams they have drawn were but copies of those innate characters which nature had engraven¹ upon their minds.

The Argument of assenting on first hearing, is upon a false supposition of no precedent teaching.

23. There is, I fear, this further weakness in the foregoing argument, which would persuade us that therefore those maxims are to be thought innate, which men admit at first hearing; because they assent to propositions which they are not taught, nor do receive from the force of any argument or demonstration, but a bare explication or understanding of the terms. Under which there seems to me to lie this fallacy, that men are supposed not to be taught nor to learn anything *de novo*; when, in truth, they are taught, and do learn something they were ignorant of before. For, first, it is evident that they have learned the terms, and their signification; neither of which was born with them. But this is not all the acquired knowledge in the case: the ideas themselves, about which the proposition is, are not born with them, no more

¹ That is, 'had engraven' *consciously at birth*, which no one worth arguing against would maintain. Cf. Bk. IV. ch. ii. § 7, on the *intuitive* evidence of *each step* in every mathematical or other demonstration. Locke himself

argues in Bk. IV. for the perceived intellectual necessity of all mathematical truths, and of the existence of God,—or as we should say, their latent 'innateness.'

than their names, but got afterwards. So that in all propositions that are assented to at first hearing, the terms of the proposition, their standing for such ideas, and the ideas themselves that they stand for, being neither of them innate, I would fain know what there is remaining in such propositions that is innate. For I would gladly have any one name that proposition whose terms or ideas were either of them innate. We *by degrees* get ideas and names, and *learn* their appropriated connexion one with another; and then to propositions made in such terms, whose signification we have learnt, and wherein the agreement or disagreement we can perceive in our ideas when put together is expressed, we at first hearing assent; though to other propositions, in themselves as certain and evident, but which are concerning ideas not so soon or so easily got, we are at the same time no way capable of assenting. For, though a child quickly assents to this proposition, 'That an apple is not fire,' when by familiar acquaintance he has got the ideas of those two different things distinctly imprinted on his mind, and has learnt that the names apple and fire stand for them; yet it will be some years after, perhaps, before the same child will assent to this proposition, 'That it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be'; because that, though perhaps the words are as easy to be learnt, yet the signification of them being more large, comprehensive, and abstract than of the names annexed to those sensible things the child hath to do with, it is longer before he learns their precise meaning, and it requires more time plainly to form in his mind those general ideas they stand for. Till that be done, you will in vain endeavour to make any child assent to a proposition made up of such general terms; but as soon as ever he has got those ideas, and learned their names, he forwardly closes with the one as well as the other of the forementioned propositions; and with both for the same reason; viz. because he finds the ideas he has in his mind to agree or disagree, according as the words standing for them are affirmed or denied one of another in the proposition. But if propositions be brought to him in words which stand for ideas he has not yet in his mind, to such propositions, however evidently true or false in themselves, he affords

neither assent nor dissent, but is ignorant. For words being but empty sounds, any further than they are signs of our ideas, we cannot but assent to them as they correspond to those ideas we have, but no further than that. But the showing by what steps and ways knowledge comes into our minds; and the grounds of several degrees of assent, being the business of the following Discourse, it may suffice to have only touched on it here, as one reason that made me doubt of those innate principles¹.

Not innate because not universally assented to.

24. To conclude this argument of universal consent, I agree with these defenders of innate principles,—that if they are innate, they must needs have universal assent². For that a truth should be innate and yet not assented to, is to me as unintelligible as for a man to know a truth and be ignorant of it at the same time³. But then, by these men's own confession, they cannot be innate; since they are not assented to by those who understand not the terms; nor by a great part of those who do understand them, but have yet never heard nor thought of those propositions; which, I think, is at least one half of mankind. But were the number far less, it would be enough to destroy universal assent, and thereby show these propositions not to be innate, if children alone were ignorant of them⁴.

¹ Here and elsewhere Locke persists in taking for granted, that the 'innateness' of ideas and of knowledge is being maintained by his adversaries in a sense that is inconsistent with much that is innate being consciously apprehended only late in life, progressing by steps, and in all cases dependently upon development of the mind, and accumulation of experience. The 'steps and ways' of knowledge, and the 'grounds of assent,' described in the sequel, need not have been thus put in antagonism to the ultimate principles for which the philosopher seeks (the only innateness worth discussing), though Locke, in his controversial temper, presented them in the light of contradictories.

² But it is a 'universal assent' that needs to be elicited and verified by a philosophical analysis of our complex experience.

³ *Conscious* assent, as he reiterates, is with him of the essence of innateness, and must be given by all (including infants) to all principles, however abstract, for which innateness can be claimed. It is easy, on this assumption, to show, either that there are no innate principles, or that, if there are, it is superfluous to vindicate their truth,—as, *ex hypothesi*, every human being from birth is, and must be, conscious that they are true.

⁴ Not if 'innate' means *necessarily latent* in an experience in which even children in a degree participate. Yet

25. But that I may not be accused to argue from the thoughts of infants, which are unknown to us, and to conclude from what passes in their understandings before they express it; I say next, that these two general propositions are not the truths that first possess the minds of children, nor are antecedent to all acquired and adventitious notions: which, if they were innate, they must needs be. Whether we can determine it or no, it matters not, there is certainly a time when children begin to think, and their words and actions do assure us that they do so. When therefore they are capable of thought, of knowledge, of assent, can it rationally be supposed they can be ignorant of those notions that nature has imprinted, were there any such? Can it be imagined, with any appearance of reason, that they perceive the impressions from things without, and be at the same time ignorant of those characters which nature itself has taken care to stamp within? Can they receive and assent to adventitious notions, and be ignorant of those which are supposed woven into the very principles of their being, and imprinted there in indelible characters, to be the foundation and guide of all their acquired knowledge and future reasonings? This would be to make nature take pains to no purpose; or at least to write very ill; since its characters could not be read by those eyes which saw other things very well: and those are very ill supposed the clearest parts of truth, and the foundations of all our knowledge, which are not first known, and without which the undoubted knowledge of several other things may be had. The child certainly knows, that the nurse that feeds it is neither the cat it plays with, nor the blackmoor it is afraid of: that the wormseed or mustard it refuses, is not the apple or sugar it cries for: this it is certainly and undoubtedly assured of: but will any one say, it is by virtue of this principle, 'That it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be,' that it so firmly assents to these and other parts of its knowledge? Or that the child has any notion or apprehension of that proposition at an age, wherein yet, it is plain, it knows a great many other truths? He that will say, children join in these general abstract speculations

These Maxims not the first known.

Locke himself says that 'we are born we have the actual exercise of either.' free, as we are born rational, not that (Tr. of Govt. II. § 61).

CHAP. I. with their sucking-bottles and their rattles, may perhaps, with
 justice, be thought to have more passion and zeal for his
 opinion, but less sincerity and truth, than one of that age¹.

And so
 not innate.

26. Though therefore there be several general propositions
 that meet with constant and ready assent, as soon as proposed
 to men grown up, who have attained the use of more general
 and abstract ideas, and names standing for them; yet they
 not being to be found in those of tender years, who never-
 theless know other things, they cannot pretend to universal
 assent of intelligent persons, and so by no means can be sup-
 posed innate;—it being impossible that any truth which is
 innate (if there were any such) should be unknown, at least to
 any one who knows anything else. Since, if they are innate
 truths, they must be innate thoughts: there being nothing
 a truth in the mind that it has never thought on². Whereby
 it is evident, if there be any innate truths, they must necessarily
 be the first of any thought on; the first that appear³.

Not
 innate,
 because
 they
 appear
 least,
 where
 what is
 innate
 shows
 itself
 clearest.

27. That the general maxims we are discoursing of are not
 known to children, idiots, and a great part of mankind, we have
 already sufficiently proved: whereby it is evident they have
 not an universal assent, nor are general impressions. But there
 is this further argument in it against their being innate: that
 these characters, if they were native and original impressions,
 should appear fairest and clearest in those persons in whom
 yet we find no footsteps of them; and it is, in my opinion, a
 strong presumption that they are not innate, since they are

¹ But the concrete judgments which children see the truth of could not be true if the abstract principles of identity and contradiction were false. They are therefore latent, and in that sense innate, in the concrete judgments;—and not useless either, for science would become chaos, and reasoning about what is real impossible, in the absence of some absolute principles of reason in us and in things.

² Again, Locke's controversial conception of innateness, as implying *conscious apprehension* of the principles and ideas which are needed to harmonize experience. The other sort of innate-

ness seems unintelligible to him.

³ This reasoning, as Leibniz shows, proves too much; for if all the truths on which experience depends must be present to the consciousness of each person, we should be deprived not only of those ultimate abstractions (which many have never actually realised in consciousness), but also of ideas of which we once thought, but have ceased to think; while, if truths are not necessarily conscious thoughts, but only natural aptitudes, there is no obstacle to our possessing some such of which we have never actually thought, and may never actually think.

least known to those in whom, if they were innate, they must needs exert themselves with most force and vigour. For children, idiots, savages¹, and illiterate people, being of all others the least corrupted by custom, or borrowed opinions; learning and education having not cast their native thoughts into new moulds; nor by superinducing foreign and studied doctrines, confounded those fair characters nature had written there; one might reasonably imagine that in *their* minds these innate notions should lie open fairly to every one's view, as it is certain the thoughts of children do². It might very well be expected that these principles should be perfectly known to naturals; which being stamped immediately on the soul, (as these men suppose,) can have no dependence on the constitution or organs of the body, the only confessed difference between them and others. One would think, according to these men's principles, that all these native beams of light (were there any such) should, in those who have no reserves, no arts of concealment, shine out in their full lustre, and leave us in no more doubt of their being there, than we are of their love of pleasure and abhorrence of pain. But alas, amongst children, idiots, savages, and the grossly illiterate, what general maxims are to be found? what universal principles of knowledge? Their notions are few and narrow, borrowed only from those objects they have had most to do with, and which have made upon their senses the frequentest and strongest impressions. A child knows his nurse and his cradle, and by degrees the playthings of a little more advanced age; and a young savage has, perhaps, his head filled with love and hunting,

CHAP. I.

¹ 'Savages': salvages, in the early editions, here and afterwards.

² The opposite conclusion follows when 'innate' is otherwise understood. Those principles which are latent in the mind of man, and in the nature of things, become patent in the consciousness of individuals, through reflex attention given to them. But 'infants, idiots, savages, and illiterate people' do not rise to this; they direct any attention which they exert to their own bodies and the external world. The abstract truths of logic

and of mathematics are, in a sense, in us, and in the nature of things,—because in apprehending them we apprehend their self-evidence; yet we need exercise of the intellectual faculty to rise into this intuitive perception of their truth. Children may be less perverted from truth, by accidental association and the hardening of custom, than adults are, while they are nevertheless unfit, as philosophers, to realise the ultimate truths on which knowledge and life depend.

CHAP. I. according to the fashion of his tribe. But he that from a child
 ——— untaught, or a wild inhabitant of the woods, will expect these abstract maxims and reputed principles of science, will, I fear, find himself mistaken. Such kind of general propositions are seldom mentioned in the huts of Indians: much less are they to be found in the thoughts of children, or any impressions of them on the minds of naturals. They are the language and business of the schools and academies of learned nations, accustomed to that sort of conversation or learning, where disputes are frequent; these maxims being suited to artificial argumentation and useful for conviction, but not much conducing to the discovery of truth or advancement of knowledge¹. But of their small use for the improvement of knowledge I shall have occasion to speak more at large, l. 4, c. 7².

Recapitulation.

28. I know not how absurd this may seem to the masters of demonstration. And probably it will hardly go down with anybody at first hearing. I must therefore beg a little truce with prejudice, and the forbearance of censure, till I have been heard out in the sequel of this Discourse, being very willing to submit to better judgments. And since I impartially search after truth, I shall not be sorry to be convinced, that I have been too fond of my own notions; which I confess we are all apt to be, when application and study have warmed our heads with them.

Upon the whole matter, I cannot see any ground to think these two speculative Maxims innate: since they are not universally assented to; and the assent they so generally find is no other than what several propositions, not allowed to be innate, equally partake in with them: and since the assent that is given them is produced another way³, and comes not from natural inscription, as I doubt not but to make appear

¹ The ultimate principles through which knowledge is harmonized, and seen in its universality, are *chronologically* not *first* principles but *last* principles—in the history alike of the individual mind and of the human race. And in both it is the history of approximation, not complete attainment.

There can be no finality in human philosophy.

² Which treats of 'maxims,' or axioms.

³ Through intuition, aided, more or less, by elaborative thinking, as explained in Bk. IV.

in the following Discourse. And if *these* 'first principles' of knowledge and science are found not to be innate, no *other* speculative maxims can (I suppose), with better right pretend to be so¹. CHAP. I.
 ———

¹ In refusing to start in speculation with abstract 'first' principles, or to allow that all men start with them, Locke seemed to himself to be leading away from the 'vast ocean of Being' into the familiar facts of ordinary

experience. But philosophy, thus led, in the end raised its old questions in a new form, when it inquired with Kant as to the *foundation* of scientific experience, which Hegel saw in the divine essence of things,—the absolute Idea.

CHAPTER II.

NO INNATE PRACTICAL PRINCIPLES¹.

CHAP. II.
 ———
 No moral Principles so clear and so generally received as the forementioned speculative Maxims.

I. IF those speculative Maxims, whereof we discoursed in the foregoing chapter, have not an actual universal assent from all mankind, as we there proved, it is much more visible concerning *practical* Principles, that they come short of an universal reception: and I think it will be hard to instance any one moral rule which can pretend to so general and ready an assent as, 'What is, is'; or to be so manifest a truth as this, that 'It is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be.' Whereby it is evident that they are further removed from a title to be innate; and the doubt of their being native impressions on the mind is stronger against those moral principles than the other². Not that it brings their truth at all in question. They are equally true, though not equally evident. Those speculative maxims carry their own evidence with them: but moral principles require reasoning and discourse, and some exercise of the mind, to discover the certainty of their truth. They lie not open as natural characters engraven on the mind; which, if any such were, they must needs be visible by themselves, and by their own light be certain and known to everybody. But this is no derogation to their truth and certainty; no more than it is to the truth or certainty of the three angles of a triangle being equal to two right ones: because it is not so evident as 'the whole is bigger than a part,'

¹ In this chapter Locke passes from the abstract principles of *speculative* knowledge—interesting to the philosophic few, to the principles of *morality and conduct*—more interesting to the mass of mankind. In this, as in the previous argument, when he concludes against innateness, he asserts self-evidence.

² It has been remarked that 'the argument for common sense,—i. e. on behalf of the theoretical and practical principles latent in man—is of principal importance 'in reference to the practical principles.' The speculative axioms, 'from their converse being absolutely incogitable, sufficiently guard themselves.' (Hamilton's Reid, p. 754.)

nor so apt to be assented to at first hearing¹. It may suffice that these moral rules are capable of demonstration²: and therefore it is our own faults if we come not to a certain knowledge of them. But the ignorance wherein many men are of them, and the slowness of assent wherewith others receive them, are manifest proofs that they are not innate, and such as offer themselves to their view without searching³.

¹ Locke reiterates the difference between an 'innate' law, *consciously* impressed upon the mind in its first original, and an intellectual necessity in the reason of things, which, although at first ignorant of, we may realise in its self-evidence, 'by the due application of our natural faculties.' In this last category Locke himself puts 'the eternal and unalterable nature of right and wrong.'

² The *demonstrable* character of the conclusions of abstract morality, determined by the eternity and immutability of abstract ethical distinctions, was a favourite speculation with Locke, which Molyneux, in his correspondence, thus urged him to develop into an ethical system:—'One thing I must needs insist on to you, which is, that you would think of obliging the world with a Treatise on Morals, drawn up according to the hints you frequently give in your *Essay* of their being demonstrable according to mathematical method. This is most certainly true; but then the task must be undertaken only by so clear and distinct a thinker as you are, and there is nothing I should more ardently wish for than to see it.' (Molyneux to Locke, August, 1692.) Locke thus replies:—'Though by the view I had of moral ideas, when I was considering that subject, I thought I saw that morality might be *demonstratively* made out, yet whether I am able so to make it out is another question. Every one could not have demonstrated what Mr. Newton's book hath shown to be demonstrable.' 'Good sir,' rejoins Molyneux, 'let me

renew my requests; for believe me, sir, 'twill be one of the most useful and glorious undertakings that can employ you. The touches you give in many places of your book on this subject are wonderfully curious. Be as large as 'tis possible on this subject, and by all means let it be in English. He that reads the 45th section on your 129th page (1st ed., now Bk. II. ch. xxi. § 70) will be inflamed to read more of the same kind from the same incomparable pen.' Locke in the end excused himself, on grounds of age and health, from the formidable enterprise. 'The Gospel,' he adds, 'contains so perfect a body of Ethics that reason may be excused from that inquiry, since she may find man's duty clearer and easier in revelation than in herself. This is the excuse of a man who, having a sufficient rule of his actions, is content therewith, and thinks he may employ the little time and strength he has in other researches wherein he is more in the dark.' Locke's thesis, that morality is as demonstrable as mathematics, is held by Cumberland, *De Legibus Naturae*, ch. i. §§ 7, 8; iv. § 4. See also Reid, *Essays on the Intellectual Powers*, vii. ch. 2.

³ 'Without searching' suggests Locke's moral purpose in this controversy against innateness—that it tends to 'ease the lazy of the pains of search,' and to leave the individual the slave of prejudices, under cover of their being 'innate principles,' given at our birth, without trouble on our part.

CHAP. II. 2. Whether there be any such moral principles, wherein all men do agree, I appeal to any who have been but moderately conversant in the history of mankind, and looked abroad beyond the smoke of their own chimneys. Where is that practical truth that is universally received, without doubt or question, as it must be if innate¹? *Justice*, and keeping of contracts, is that which most men seem to agree in². This is a principle³ which is thought to extend itself to the dens of thieves, and the confederacies of the greatest villains; and they who have gone furthest towards the putting off of humanity itself, keep faith and rules of justice one with another. I grant that outlaws themselves do this one amongst another: but it is without receiving these as the innate laws of nature. They practise them as rules of convenience within their own communities: but it is impossible to conceive that he embraces justice as a practical principle, who acts fairly with his fellow-highwayman, and at the same time plunders or kills the next honest man he meets with. Justice and truth are the common ties of society; and therefore even outlaws and robbers, who break with all the world besides, must keep faith and rules of equity amongst themselves; or else they cannot hold together. But will any one say, that those that live by fraud or rapine have innate principles of truth and justice which they allow and assent to?

Objection: 3. Perhaps it will be urged, that the tacit assent of their minds agrees to what their practice contradicts. I answer, first, I have always thought the actions of men the best

¹ That diversity of belief is greater in regard to fundamental principles of action than in the case of the abstract principles of identity and contradiction, does not prove want of self-evidence in the former, but only that owing to the greater complexity of practical principles, and their affinity with our passions, 'more pain of search' is needed to enable the individual to recognise the self-evidence that is latent.

² But might not all, by due development of their latent reason, be made to see the self-evident morality in-

involved in contract-keeping; thus showing that our mind is not originally like white paper, in the sense of being equally disposed to accept any propositions regarding conduct; and disproving the hypothesis that antecedent to human custom and constitution, or to special revelation, there was nothing absolutely good or bad?

³ As put by Locke himself, 'it is every man's duty to be just, whether there is any such thing as a just man in the world or no.' (*Conduct of Understanding*, § 24.)

interpreters of their thoughts. But, since it is certain that most men's practices, and some men's open professions, have either questioned or denied these principles, it is impossible to establish an universal consent, (though we should look for it only amongst grown men,) without which it is impossible to conclude them innate. Secondly, it is very strange and unreasonable to suppose innate practical principles, that terminate only in contemplation. Practical principles, derived from nature, are there for operation, and must produce conformity of action, not barely speculative assent to their truth, or else they are in vain distinguished from speculative maxims. Nature, I confess, has put into man a desire of happiness and an aversion to misery: these indeed are innate practical principles¹ which (as practical principles ought) do continue constantly to operate and influence all our actions without ceasing: these may be observed in all persons and all ages, steady and universal; but these are *inclinations of the appetite* to good, not impressions of truth on the understanding. I deny not that there are natural tendencies imprinted on the minds of men; and that from the very first instances of sense and perception, there are some things that are grateful and others unwelcome to them; some things that they incline to and others that they fly: but this makes nothing for innate characters on the mind, which are to be the principles of knowledge regulating our practice. Such natural impressions on the understanding are so far from being confirmed hereby, that this is an argument against

¹ In our natural desire for the continuance and return of felt pleasure, and our aversion from felt uneasiness, —Locke finds an example of a tendency which he allows to be 'innate,' because practically operative as soon as there is any consciousness of either. Whether this innate tendency is the supreme motive of human action is considered in the sequel (e. g. Bk. II. ch. xxi). Moreover, men often mistake or differ in their applications even of this acknowledged innate tendency, and in their estimates of remote as

compared with near and obvious rewards and punishments, but this difference of judgment is not inconsistent with the innateness of the tendency. 'Men have a natural tendency to what delights and from what pains them. This universal observation has established past doubt. But that the soul has such a tendency to what is morally good and from evil has not fallen under my observation, and therefore I cannot grant it.' (MS. *Marginalia Lockiana*, 1699.)

CHAP. II.
Faith and
Justice not
owned as
Principles
by all Men.

CHAP. II.
their
Practice,
yet they
admit them
in their
Thoughts
answered.

CHAP. II. them; since, if there were certain characters imprinted by nature on the understanding, as the principles of knowledge, we could not but perceive them constantly operate in us and influence our knowledge, as we do those others on the will and appetite; which never cease to be the constant springs and motives of all our actions, to which we perpetually feel them strongly impelling us.

Moral Rules need a Proof, ergo not innate.

4. Another reason that makes me doubt of any innate practical principles is, that I think *there cannot any one moral rule be proposed whereof a man may not justly demand a reason*: which would be perfectly ridiculous and absurd if they were innate; or so much as self-evident, which every innate principle must needs be, and not need any proof to ascertain its truth, nor want any reason to gain it approbation¹. He would be thought void of common sense² who asked on the one side, or on the other side went to give a reason *why* 'it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be.' It carries its own light and evidence with it, and needs no other proof: he that understands the terms assents to it for its own sake or else nothing will ever be able to prevail with him to do it. But should that most unshaken rule of morality and foundation of all social virtue, 'That one should do as he would be done unto,' be proposed to one

¹ All that was (in Locke's sense) 'innate' would also be self-evident; but what is self-evident is not therefore innate, if innate means consciously recognised at birth.

² The 'common sense,' or common reason, is here taken by Locke as the evidence and guarantee of the abstract logical axiom of contradiction. 'There is here,' says Hamilton, 'a confession, the importance of which has been observed neither by Locke nor his antagonists. Had Locke not . . . been led astray in the pursuit of an *ignis fatuus*—in his refutation of the Cartesian theory of Innate Ideas, which certainly as impugned by him neither Descartes nor the representatives of his school ever dreamt of holding—he would have seen that, in thus appealing

to *common sense*, he was, in fact, surrendering his thesis—that all our knowledge is an educt from experience. For in admitting, as he here virtually does, that experience must ultimately ground its procedure on the laws of intellect, he admits that intellect contains principles of judgment on which experience, being dependent, cannot possibly be their precursor or their cause.' (Hamilton's Reid, pp. 784, 5.) This depends on whether Locke does or does not include in 'experience' *its own necessary presuppositions*, which are held unconsciously in ordinary experience, but which it is the office of speculative philosophy (neglected by Locke) to articulate into distinct consciousness.

CHAP. II. who never heard of it before, but yet is of capacity to understand its meaning; might he not without any absurdity ask a reason why? And were not he that proposed it bound to make out the truth and reasonableness of it to him? Which plainly shows it not to be innate; for if it were it could neither want nor receive any proof; but must needs (at least as soon as heard and understood) be received and assented to as an unquestionable truth, which a man can by no means doubt of. So that the truth of all these moral rules plainly depends upon some other antecedent to them, and from which they must be *deduced*¹; which could not be if either they were innate or so much as self-evident.

5. That men should keep their compacts is certainly a great and undeniable rule in morality. But yet, if a Christian, who has the view of happiness and misery in another life, be asked why a man must keep his word, he will give this as a reason:—Because God, who has the power of eternal life and death, requires it of us². But if a Hobbist be asked why? he will answer:—Because the public requires it, and the Leviathan will punish you if you do not³. And if one of the old philosophers had been asked, he would have answered:—Because it was dishonest, below the dignity of a man, and opposite to virtue, the highest perfection of human nature, to do otherwise.

6. Hence naturally flows the great variety of opinions concerning moral rules which are to be found among men, according to the different sorts of happiness they have a prospect of, or propose to themselves; which could not be if practical principles were innate, and imprinted in our minds immediately by the hand of God. I grant the existence of God is so many ways manifest, and the obedience we owe

¹ Deduction may be needed to evolve that which is nevertheless virtually in us, and in the nature of things, already.

² He looks here to the received sanctions of conduct, rather than to the immutability of moral law in the nature of things. Reasoning resolves the self-evident principles of morality into the

eternal and immutable nature of God; but without legislative sanctions it fails to guard conduct against the pressure of the appetites.

³ See Hobbes, *De Homine*, ch. 14. This sarcastic reference is the only express mention of Hobbes in the *Essay*.

CHAP. II. him so congruous to the light of reason, that a great part of mankind give testimony to the law of nature: but yet I think it must be allowed that several moral rules may receive from mankind a very general approbation, without either knowing or admitting the true ground of morality; which can only be the will and law of a God, who sees men in the dark, has in his hand rewards and punishments, and power enough to call to account the proudest offender¹. For, God having, by an inseparable connexion, joined virtue and public happiness together, and made the practice thereof necessary to the preservation of society, and visibly beneficial to all with whom the virtuous man has to do; it is no wonder that every one should not only allow, but recommend and magnify those rules to others, from whose observance of them he is sure to reap advantage to himself. He may, out of interest as well as conviction, cry up that for sacred, which, if once trampled on and profaned, he himself cannot be safe nor secure. This, though it takes nothing from the moral and eternal obligation which these rules evidently have², yet it shows that the outward acknowledgment men pay to them in their words proves not that they are innate principles: nay, it proves not so much as that men assent to them inwardly in their own minds, as the inviolable rules of their own practice; since we find that self-interest, and the conveniences of this life, make many men own an outward profession and approbation of them, whose actions sufficiently

¹ That a Christian, a Hobbist, and a Heathen should give different reasons for observing a moral rule does not disprove the obligation of that rule, antecedently to the intermediate principles on which they ground it. Locke is apt to rest content with premisses which are short of the ultimate ones for which the philosopher craves; but he recognises in many passages the conception of ethical law, eternal and divine, superior to custom and to the judgments of human conscience. 'Truth and keeping of faith,' he says, 'belong to men as men, and not merely

as members of society.' (*Tr. of Government*, ii. 14.)

² Moral obligation, which is eternal and grounded on reason, is thus distinguished from the contingency of an individual recognition of, and conformity to, what is in itself thus obligatory. In what follows it only appears that men are not actually as good as they know they ought to be. His argument is, that immoral practice without reproach of conscience proves that the law transgressed cannot be innate, or consciously acknowledged by all.

CHAP. II. prove that they very little consider the Lawgiver that prescribed these rules; nor the hell that he has ordained for the punishment of those that transgress them.

7. For, if we will not in civility allow too much sincerity to the professions of most men, but think their actions to be the interpreters of their thoughts, we shall find that they have no such internal veneration for these rules, nor so full a persuasion of their certainty and obligation. The great principle of morality, 'To do as one would be done to,' is more commended than practised. But the breach of this rule cannot be a greater vice, than to teach others, that it is no moral rule, nor obligatory, would be thought madness, and contrary to that interest men sacrifice to, when they break it themselves. Perhaps *conscience* will be urged as checking us for such breaches, and so the internal obligation and establishment of the rule be preserved.

8. To which I answer, that I doubt not but, without being written on their hearts, many men may, by the same way that they come to the knowledge of other things, come to assent to several moral rules, and be convinced of their obligation. Others also may come to be of the same mind, from their education, company, and customs of their country; which persuasion, however got, will serve to set conscience on work; which is nothing else but [our own opinion or judgment of the moral rectitude or pravity of our own actions¹]; and if conscience be a proof of innate principles, contraries may be

¹ In first three editions—'Our own opinion of our own actions.' Locke's 'conscience' is individual and variable, and thus distinguished from the abstract relations of eternal and immutable morality. When Thomas Burnet asked him, 'What those laws are that we ought to obey, or how we can know them without revelation, unless you take in natural conscience for a distinction of good and evil, or another idea of God than what you have given us?' he replied—'It is not conscience that makes the distinction of good and evil, conscience only judging of an

action by that which it takes to be [eternal] rule of good and evil, acquits or condemns it. But where is it,' he asks, 'I so much as mention, much less assert, an arbitrary difference of good and evil?' Again, 'I call not conscience practical principles. Produce the place where I so represent it. He who confounds the judgment made with the rule or law upon which it is made may perhaps talk so. Conscience is not the law of nature, but judging by that which is (by it) taken to be the law.' (*Marginalia Lockiana.*)

Men's actions convince us, that the Rule of Virtue is not their internal Principle.

Conscience no Proof of any innate Moral Rule.

CHAP. II. innate principles; since some men with the same bent of conscience prosecute what others avoid¹.

Instances of Enormities practised without Remorse.

9. But I cannot see how any men should ever transgress those moral rules, with confidence and serenity, were they innate, and stamped upon their minds. View but an army at the sacking of a town, and see what observation or sense of moral principles, or what touch of conscience for all the outrages they do. Robberies, murders, rapes, are the sports of men set at liberty from punishment and censure. Have there not been whole nations, and those of the most civilized people, amongst whom the exposing their children, and leaving them in the fields to perish by want or wild beasts has been the practice; as little condemned or scrupled as the begetting them²? Do they not still, in some countries, put them into the same graves with their mothers, if they die in childbirth; or despatch them, if a pretended astrologer declares them to have unhappy stars? And are there not places where, at a certain age, they kill or expose their parents, without any remorse at all³? In a part of Asia, the sick, when their case comes to be thought desperate, are carried out and laid on the earth before they are dead; and left there, exposed to wind and weather, to perish without assistance or pity⁴.

¹ If moral ideas or moral rules (which are the moral principles I deny to be innate) are innate, I say children must actually know them as well as men. But if by moral principles you mean a faculty to find out in time the moral difference of actions—besides, that this is an improper way of speaking, to call a power principles, I never denied such a power to be innate, but that which I denied was that any *idea* or *connection of ideas* was innate. (*Marginalia Lockiana.*) In what follows the fallibility of 'conscience,' as a guide in concrete morality, or as a spontaneous revelation of eternal and immutable principles to the individual, is argued, from the various and self-contradictory moral judgments of men.

² The custom of infanticide has been vindicated, on the ground that human life is valuable, and its destruction criminal, only after it has lasted long enough to be possessed of self-conscious intelligence.

³ Extreme old age was regarded as a return of infancy.

⁴ Gruber, apud Thevenot, part iv. p. 13. The reference here and elsewhere is to the collection of travels, in two folios, entitled *Relations des divers Voyages curieux*, par M. Melchisedec Thevenot, of which some account is given in the appendix to the 'History of Navigation,' prefixed to Churchill's *Collection of Voyages* (1704)—by some attributed to Locke, and contained in the 1812 edition of his Works, vol. x. p. 357.

It is familiar among the Mingrelians, a people professing Christianity, to bury their children alive without scruple¹. There are places where they eat their own children². The Caribbees were wont to geld their children, on purpose to fat and eat them³. And Garcilasso de la Vega tells us of a people in Peru which were wont to fat and eat the children they got on their female captives, whom they kept as concubines for that purpose, and when they were past breeding, the mothers themselves were killed too and eaten⁴. The virtues whereby the Tououpinambos believed they merited paradise, were revenge, and eating abundance of their enemies. They have not so much as a name for God⁵, and have no religion, no worship. The saints who are canonized amongst the Turks, lead lives which one cannot with modesty relate. A remarkable passage to this purpose, out of the voyage of Baumgarten⁶, which is a book not every day to be met with, I shall set down at large, in the language it is published in. *Ibi (sc. prope Belbes in Ægypto) vidimus sanctum unum Saracenicum inter arenarum cumulos, ita ut ex utero matris prodiiit nudum sedentem. Mos est, ut didicimus, Mahometistis, ut eos, qui amentes et sine ratione sunt, pro sanctis colant et venerentur. Insuper et eos, qui cum diu vitam egerint inquinatissimam, voluntariam demum pœnitentiam et paupertatem, sanctitate venerandos deputant. Ejusmodi verò genus hominum libertatem quandam effrenem habent, domos quos volunt intrandi, edendi, bibendi, et quod majus est, concumbendi; ex quo concubitu, si proles secuta fuerit, sancta similiter habetur. His ergo hominibus dum vivunt, magnos exhibent honores; mortuis verò vel templa vel monumenta extruunt amplissima, eosque contingere ac sepelire maximæ fortunæ ducunt loco. Audivimus hæc dicta et dicenda per interpretem à Mucrelo nostro. Insuper sanctum illum, quem eo loco vidimus, publicitus apprimè commendari, eum esse hominem sanctum,*

¹ Lambert apud Thevenot, p. 38.

² Vossius, *De Nili Origine*, c. 18, 19.

³ P. Mart, Dec. 1.

⁴ *Hist. des Incas*, l. i. c. 12.

⁵ Lery, c. 16, 216, 231.

⁶ A German nobleman, whose travels in Egypt, Arabia, and Palestine in

1507 contain much information that at the time was new and curious concerning the history, manners, and religion of these countries. His journal of his travels, in Latin, was corrected by Joseph Scaliger, and first appeared in English in Churchill's *Collection*.

CHAP. II. *divinum ac integritate præcipuum; eo quod, nec fæminarum unquam esset, nec puerorum, sed tantummodo asellarum concubitor atque mularum.* (Peregr. Baumgarten, l. ii. c. 1. p. 73.)
 [¹ More of the same kind concerning these precious saints amongst the Turks may be seen in Pietro della Valle, in his letter of the 25th of January, 1616.]

Where then are those innate principles of justice, piety, gratitude, equity, chastity? Or where is that universal consent that assures us there are such inbred rules? Murders in duels, when fashion has made them honourable, are committed without remorse of conscience: nay, in many places innocence in this case is the greatest ignominy. And if we look abroad to take a view of men as they are, we shall find that they have remorse, in one place, for doing or omitting that which others, in another place, think they merit by.

Men have
contrary
practical
Principles.

10. He that will carefully peruse the history of mankind, and look abroad into the several tribes of men, and with indifference² survey their actions, will be able to satisfy himself, that there is scarce that principle of morality to be named, or rule of virtue to be thought on, (those only excepted that are absolutely necessary to hold society together, which commonly too are neglected betwixt distinct societies,) which is not, somewhere or other, slighted and condemned by the general fashion of whole societies of men, governed by practical opinions and rules of living quite opposite to others.

Whole
Nations
reject
several
Moral
Rules.

11. Here perhaps it will be objected, that it is no argument that the rule is not known, because it is broken. I grant the objection good where men, though they transgress, yet disown not the law; where fear of shame, censure, or punishment carries the mark of some awe it has upon them. But it is impossible to conceive that a whole nation of men should all publicly reject and renounce what every one of them certainly and infallibly knew to be a law; for so they must who have it naturally imprinted on their minds. It is possible men may sometimes own rules of morality which in their private thoughts they do not believe to be true, only to keep them-

¹ Added in French version.

² 'With indifferency'—without bias.

CHAP. II. selves in reputation and esteem amongst those who are persuaded of their obligation. But it is not to be imagined that a whole society of men should publicly and professedly disown and cast off a rule which they could not in their own minds but be infallibly certain was a law; nor be ignorant that all men they should have to do with knew it to be such: and therefore must every one of them apprehend from others all the contempt and abhorrence due to one who professes himself void of humanity: and one who, confounding the known and natural measures of right and wrong, cannot but be looked on as the professed enemy of their peace and happiness. Whatever practical principle is innate, cannot but be known to every one to be just and good. It is therefore little less than a contradiction to suppose, that whole nations of men should, both in their professions and practice, unanimously and universally give the lie to what, by the most invincible evidence, every one of them knew to be true, right, and good¹. This is enough to satisfy us that no practical rule which is anywhere universally, and with public approbation or allowance, transgressed, can be supposed innate.—But I have something further to add in answer to this objection.

12. The breaking of a rule, say you, is no argument that it is unknown. I grant it: but the *generally allowed* breach of it anywhere, I say, is a proof that it is not innate. For example: let us take any of these rules, which, being the most obvious deductions of human reason, and conformable to the natural inclination of the greatest part of men, fewest people have had the impudence to deny or inconsideration to doubt of. If any can be thought to be naturally imprinted, none, I think, can have a fairer pretence to be innate than this: 'Parents, preserve and cherish your children.' When, therefore, you say that this is an innate rule, what do you mean? Either that it is an innate principle which upon all occasions excites and directs the actions of all men; or else, that it is a truth which all men have imprinted on their minds, and

The
generally
allowed
breach of
a rule
proof that
it is not
innate.

¹ 'Whatever may be affirmed of the nature of any whole nation may likewise be affirmed of all mankind; as all the properties of bread are in a loaf,

and also in a piece cut out of it.' (MS. note by Tyrrell in his copy of the *Essay*.)

CHAP. II. which therefore they know and assent to. But in neither of these senses is it innate. *First*, that it is not a principle which influences all men's actions, is what I have proved by the examples before cited: nor need we seek so far as Mingrelia or Peru to find instances of such as neglect, abuse, nay, and destroy their children; or look on it only as the more than brutality of some savage and barbarous nations, when we remember that it was a familiar and uncondemned practice amongst the Greeks and Romans to expose, without pity or remorse, their innocent infants. *Secondly*, that it is an innate truth, known to all men, is also false. For, 'Parents preserve your children,' is so far from an innate truth, that it is no truth at all: it being a command, and not a proposition, and so not capable of truth or falsehood. To make it capable of being assented to as true, it must be reduced to some such proposition as this: 'It is the duty of parents to preserve their children.' But what duty is, cannot be understood without a law; nor a law be known or supposed without a lawmaker, or without reward and punishment; so that it is impossible that this, or any other, practical principle should be innate, i. e. be imprinted on the mind as a duty, without supposing the ideas of God, of law, of obligation, of punishment, of a life after this, innate: for that punishment follows not in this life the breach of this rule, and consequently that it has not the force of a law in countries where the generally allowed practice runs counter to it, is in itself evident. But these ideas (which must be all of them innate, if anything as a duty be so) are so far from being innate, that it is not every studious or thinking man, much less every one that is born, in whom they are to be found clear and distinct; and that one of them, which of all others seems most likely to be innate, is not so, (I mean the idea of God,) I think, in the next chapter¹, will appear very evident to any considering man.

If men
can be
ignorant
of what is

13. From what has been said, I think we may safely conclude, that whatever practical rule is in any place generally and with allowance broken, cannot be supposed innate; it

¹ Ch. iii §§ 8-17.

being impossible that men should, without shame or fear, confidently and serenely, break a rule which they could not but evidently know that God had set up, and would certainly punish the breach of, (which they must, if it were innate,) to a degree to make it a very ill bargain to the transgressor. Without such a knowledge as this, a man can never be certain that anything is his duty. Ignorance or doubt of the law, hopes to escape the knowledge or power of the law-maker, or the like, may make men give way to a present appetite; but let any one see the fault, and the rod by it, and with the transgression, a fire ready to punish it; a pleasure tempting, and the hand of the Almighty visibly held up and prepared to take vengeance, (for this must be the case where any duty is imprinted on the mind,) and then tell me whether it be possible for people with such a prospect, such a certain knowledge as this, wantonly, and without scruple, to offend against a law which they carry about them in indelible characters, and that stares them in the face whilst they are breaking it? Whether men, at the same time that they feel in themselves the imprinted edicts of an Omnipotent Law-maker, can, with assurance and gaiety, slight and trample underfoot his most sacred injunctions? And lastly, whether it be possible that whilst a man thus openly bids defiance to this innate law and supreme Lawgiver, all the bystanders, yea, even the governors and rulers of the people, full of the same sense both of the law and Law-maker, should silently connive, without testifying their dislike or laying the least blame on it? Principles of actions indeed there are lodged in men's appetites; but these are so far from being innate moral principles, that if they were left to their full swing they would carry men to the overturning of all morality. Moral laws are set as a curb and restraint to these exorbitant desires, which they cannot be but by rewards and punishments that will overbalance the satisfaction any one shall propose to himself in the breach of the law. If, therefore, anything be imprinted on the minds of all men as a law, all men must have a certain and unavoidable knowledge that certain and unavoidable punishment will attend the breach of it. For if men can be ignorant or doubtful of what is innate, innate principles are

CHAP. II.
innate,
certainly
is not
described
by innate
principles.

CHAP. II. insisted on, and urged to no purpose; truth and certainty (the things pretended) are not at all secured by them; but men are in the same uncertain floating estate with as without them. An evident indubitable knowledge of unavoidable punishment, great enough to make the transgression very uneligible, must accompany an innate law; unless with an innate law they can suppose an innate Gospel too. I would not here be mistaken, as if, because I deny an innate law, I thought there were none but positive laws. There is a great deal of difference between an innate law, and a law of nature; between something imprinted on our minds in their very original, and something that we, being ignorant of, may attain to the knowledge of, by the use and due application of our natural faculties. And I think they equally forsake the truth who, running into contrary extremes, either affirm an innate law, or deny that there is a law knowable by the light of nature, i. e. without the help of positive revelation¹.

Those who maintain innate practical Principles tell us not what they are.

14. The difference there is amongst men in their practical principles is so evident that I think I need say no more to evince, that it will be impossible to find any innate moral rules by this mark of general assent; and it is enough to make one suspect that the supposition of such innate principles is but an opinion taken up at pleasure; since those who talk so confidently of them are so sparing to tell us

¹ Thus Locke distinguishes 'innate law,' which he argues against, from the eternal and immutable moral law of nature, which he acknowledges (cf. Bk. II. ch. xxviii. §§ 7, 8, as in the successive editions of the *Essay*.) In a letter to Tyrrell (August 4, 1691, see Lord King's 'Life'), he tries to remove misunderstandings as to what he intended by 'the law of nature,' as part of the revealed *divine* law,—the consideration of which he regards as irrelevant, when he is 'not designing to treat of the [absolute and universal] grounds of true morality, which is necessary to true and perfect happiness,' but was only trying to show 'whence men had got their moral

ideas, and what they were.' 'I only report as matters of fact *what others call virtue and vice*,' is his reply to Lowde's charge of 'subverting the eternal and immutable nature of moral distinctions.' The facts of human life may thus conceal the abstract laws with which they are at variance; for the eternal laws of morality do not put men under physical necessity actually to obey them, but only under moral obligation. Locke's admiration of Hooker may have influenced him in his recognition of 'that law which, as laid up in the bosom of God, they call eternal.' See *Eccles. Hist.* Bk. I. 3. Note how Locke contrasts 'innate' and 'natural.'

CHAP. II. which they are. This might with justice be expected from those men who lay stress upon this opinion; and it gives occasion to distrust either their knowledge or charity, who, declaring that God has imprinted on the minds of men the foundations of knowledge and the rules of living, are yet so little favourable to the information of their neighbours, or the quiet of mankind, as not to point out to them which they are, in the variety men are distracted with. But, in truth, were there any such innate principles there would be no need to teach them. Did men find such innate propositions stamped on their minds, they would easily be able to distinguish them from other truths that they afterwards learned and deduced from them; and there would be nothing more easy than to know what, and how many, they were. There could be no more doubt about their number than there is about the number of our fingers; and it is like then every system would be ready to give them us by tale. But since nobody, that I know, has ventured yet to give a catalogue of them, they cannot blame those who doubt of these innate principles; since even they who require men to believe that there are such innate propositions, do not tell us what they are¹. It is easy to foresee, that if different men of different sects should go about to give us a list of those innate practical principles, they would set down only such as suited their distinct hypotheses, and were fit to support the doctrines of their particular schools or churches; a plain evidence that there are no such innate truths. Nay, a great part of men are so far from finding any such innate moral principles in themselves, that, by denying freedom to mankind, and thereby making men no other than bare machines, they take away not only innate, but all moral rules whatsoever, and leave not a possibility to believe any such, to those who cannot conceive

¹ To detect and to express in their abstract generality and harmony the principles in which the universe, and thus the sciences, are harmonised, is the ideal towards which philosophy is perpetually struggling; although inadequate capacity and experience now, perhaps for ever, hinder the

philosopher from attaining a clear and distinct understanding of the universe, in the full light of the reason according to which it is constituted. Nevertheless human intellect remains restless in the isolation of the special sciences, notwithstanding their relative lucidity.

CHAP. II. how anything can be capable of a law that is not a free agent. And upon that ground they must necessarily reject all principles of virtue, who cannot put *morality* and *mechanism* together, which are not very easy to be reconciled or made consistent¹.

Lord Herbert's innate Principles examined.

15. When I had written this, being informed that my Lord Herbert had, in his book *De Veritate*², assigned these innate principles, I presently consulted him, hoping to find in a man of so great parts, something that might satisfy me in this point, and put an end to my inquiry. In his chapter *De Instinctu Naturali*, p. 72, ed. 1656, I met with these six marks of his *Notitiæ Communes*:—1. *Prioritas*. 2. *Independentia*. 3. *Universalitas*. 4. *Certitudo*. 5. *Necessitas*, i.e. as he explains it, *faciunt ad hominis conservationem*. 6. *Modus conformationis*, i.e. *Assensus nullâ interpositâ morâ*. And at the latter end of his little treatise *De Religione Laici*, he says this of these innate principles: *Adeo ut non uniuscujusvis religionis confinio arcentur quæ ubique vigent veritates. Sunt enim in ipsâ mente cælitus descriptæ, nullisque traditionibus, sive scriptis, sive non scriptis, obnoxia*, p. 3. And *Veritates nostræ catholicæ, quæ tanquam indubia Dei emata in foro interiori descriptæ*.

Thus, having given the marks³ of the innate principles or

¹ In thus distinguishing 'morality' and 'mechanism' Locke recognises the inadequacy of a merely physical interpretation of morality, and leaves room for the supremacy of moral and spiritual reality over that reality which is only sensuous and physical.

² The *De Veritate, prout distinguitur a Revelatione, a Verisimili, a Possibili, et a Falso* of Lord Herbert of Cherbury (1581–1648), appeared in 1624, at Paris and London. To the third edition (London, 1645) are annexed two tractates—*De Causis Errorum* and *De Religione Laici*. The speculations of this remarkable thinker deserve the careful study of every critical reader of Locke's *Essay*, not only on account of this explicit reference to them, but as a significant phenomenon in the history of English philosophy. They had

before Locke attracted the attention of Descartes (*Œuvres*, ed. Par. viii. 138, 168), Gassendi (Op. iii. 411), and Culverwell in his *Light of Nature*. That Locke should have been thus ignorant of the *De Veritate* shows his comparative indifference to books, and to the philosophical opinions of others. Lord Herbert tried to place English Deism on a philosophical basis, as the universal religion, *constituted by the 'innate principles' here mentioned, which seemed to him to make external or miraculous revelation superfluous*. Yet miracles might be a means of evoking and consolidating spiritual ideas and principles otherwise latent in man, even on Lord Herbert's hypothesis.

³ The 'universal consent,' of which Locke makes so much in this and the

CHAP. II. common notions, and asserted their being imprinted on the minds of men by the hand of God, he proceeds to set them down, and they are these¹:—1. *Esse aliquod supremum numen*. 2. *Numen illud coli debere*. 3. *Virtutem cum pietate conjunctam optimam esse rationem cultûs divini*. 4. *Resipiscendum esse à peccatis*. 5. *Dari præmium vel pœnam post hanc vitam transactam*. Though I allow these to be clear truths, and

preceding chapter, is thus not the only, nor indeed the chief, *test* which Lord Herbert proposes for distinguishing truths ultimate and absolute from the contingent data of experience; nor does he assume, regarding the former, that they are innate in the sense of being truths of which every human being is conscious at birth, or that they are then held otherwise than virtually. Leibniz made an advance here, in his proposed test of their existence, and his express recognition that they are at first, and may be always, only unconsciously held. Their test is with him *the intellectual necessity we find ourselves under to accept them as soon as they are perceived, and the intellectual impossibility of supposing their contradictories*. Thus, that two parallel straight lines cannot enclose a space is *seen to be intellectually necessary*; the supposition that they can enclose it is incapable of being realised in thought, in the way that a suspension of the law of gravitation, or of any other natural law, might be conceived. And though this example may not have occurred in the conscious experience of some men, it can be shown, by analysis of what consciousness implies, to be in it *virtually*. 'Do all truths,' he asks, 'depend upon induction and experience, or are there not some which have another foundation? The senses, although their data are needed for actual knowledge, are inadequate to account for all that knowledge implies; for the senses can only give examples, that is particular or individual truths. Now the examples which verify

an inductive generalisation, however numerous, cannot show that it is *universally necessary*; for we are not intellectually obliged to conceive that what has happened must always in like manner happen. . . . That day follows night is seen not to be a necessary or eternal truth, when we consider that the earth and sun themselves (on which this succession depends) have no necessary existence, and that a time may come when the whole solar system will cease to exist—at least, in its present form. . . . The original proof of truths of reason comes from the necessities of reason, while other truths are dependent on what we happen to observe. How great soever may be the number of observed instances of an inductive generalisation, we can never be absolutely certain of its universality, unless we discern its intellectual necessity. The senses may verify generalisations, but cannot demonstrate their eternal and unconditional certainty.' (See *Nouveaux Essais, Avant-Propos*.) But while the 'innate' (not in Locke's sense) principles of *speculation* are thus guarded by their perceived necessity, 'innate' *moral* principles are those rather which only *good* men cannot reject.

¹ The five propositions which follow are offered by Lord Herbert, not as the result of an exhaustive analysis of the 'natural instincts,' or constituents of the Common Reason, but only as examples of those among them which constitute the catholic religion of mankind.

BOOK I. such as, if rightly explained, a rational creature can hardly
 CHAP. II. avoid giving his assent to, yet I think he is far from proving them innate impressions *in foro interiori descriptæ*. For I must take leave to observe:—

These five either not all, or more than all, if there are any. 16. First, that these five propositions are either not all, or more than all, those common notions written on our minds by the finger of God; if it were reasonable to believe any at all to be so written. Since there are other propositions which, even by his own rules, have as just a pretence to such an original, and may be as well admitted for innate principles, as at least some of these five he enumerates, viz. 'Do as thou wouldst be done unto.' And perhaps some hundreds of others, when well considered.

The supposed marks wanting. 17. Secondly, that all his marks are not to be found in each of his five propositions, viz. his first, second, and third marks agree perfectly to neither of them; and the first, second, third, fourth, and sixth marks agree but ill to his third, fourth, and fifth propositions. For, besides that we are assured from history of many men, nay whole nations, who doubt or disbelieve some or all of them¹, I cannot see how the third, viz. 'That virtue joined with piety is the best worship of God,' can be an innate principle, when the name or sound *virtue*, is so hard to be understood; liable to so much uncertainty in its signification; and the thing it stands for so much contended about and difficult to be known². And therefore this cannot be but a very uncertain rule of human practice, and serve but very little to the conduct of our lives, and is therefore very unfit to be assigned as an innate practical principle.

Of little use if they were innate. 18. For let us consider this proposition as to its meaning, (for it is the sense, and not sound, that is and must be the principle or common notion,) viz. 'Virtue is the best worship of God,' i. e. is most acceptable to him; which, if virtue be

¹ As already remarked, Locke looks too much for express recognition, and overlooks indirect signs of the presence of unconscious or semi-conscious beliefs. He is besides uncritically credulous of reports, by travellers and others, even less critical than he was himself.

² This is his often repeated assumption,—that innate *principles* always presuppose innate *ideas*, inasmuch as they must be otherwise propositions containing meaningless terms. He grants that *connections* of ideas, after experience has given the ideas, may be seen to be necessary.

BOOK I. taken, as most commonly it is, for those actions which, according to the different opinions of several countries, are accounted laudable, will be a proposition so far from being certain, that it will not be true. If virtue be taken for actions conformable to God's will, or to the rule prescribed by God—which is the true and only measure of virtue [¹when virtue is used to signify what is in its own nature right and good]—then this proposition, 'That virtue is the best worship of God,' will be most true and certain, but of very little use in human life: since it will amount to no more but this, viz. 'That God is pleased with the doing of what he commands';—which a man may certainly know to be true, without knowing *what it is* that God doth command; and so be as far from any rule or principle of his actions as he was before. And I think very few will take a proposition which amounts to no more than this, viz. 'That God is pleased with the doing of what he himself commands,' for an innate moral principle written on the minds of all men, (however true and certain it may be,) since it teaches so little². Whosoever does so will have reason to think hundreds of propositions innate principles; since there are many which have as good a title as this to be received for such, which nobody yet ever put into that rank of innate principles³.

19. Nor is the fourth proposition (viz. 'Men must repent of their sins') much more instructive, till what those actions are that are meant by sins be set down. For the word *peccata*, or sins, being put, as it usually is, to signify in general ill actions that will draw punishment upon the doers, what great principle of morality can that be to tell us we should be sorry, and cease to do that which will bring mischief upon us; without knowing what those particular actions are that will do so? Indeed this is a very true proposition, and fit to be

BOOK I.
 CHAP. II.

Scarce possible that God should engrave principles in words of uncertain meaning.

¹ Added in second edition.

² The 'emptiness' of the ultimate, and therefore highly abstract, principles which are called 'innate' is one of his objections to their being recognised by a practical philosopher like himself. They cannot, *per se*, inform the mind of anything that happens.

³ Because a philosopher seeks for the most comprehensive categories of thought; but not primarily for all the conclusions that may be evolved from them, or that are determined by them, as applied presuppositions in concrete inferences.

BOOK I. inculcated on and received by those who are supposed to have
 CHAP. II. been taught *what* actions in all kinds *are* sins: but neither this nor the former can be imagined to be innate principles; nor to be of any use if they were innate, unless the particular measures and bounds of all virtues and vices were engraven in men's minds, and were innate principles also, which I think is very much to be doubted. And therefore, I imagine, it will scarcely seem possible that God should engrave principles in men's minds, in words of uncertain signification, such as *virtues* and *sins*, which amongst different men stand for different things: nay, it cannot be supposed to be in words at all, which, being in most of these principles very general, names, cannot be understood but by knowing the particulars comprehended under them. And in the practical instances, the measures must be taken from the knowledge of the actions themselves, and the rules of them,—abstracted from words, and antecedent to the knowledge of names; which rules a man must know, what language soever he chance to learn, whether English or Japan, or if he should learn no language at all, or never should understand the use of words, as happens in the case of dumb and deaf men. When it shall be made out that men ignorant of words, or untaught by the laws and customs of their country, know that it is part of the worship of God, not to kill another man; not to know more women than one; not to procure abortion; not to expose their children; not to take from another what is his, though we want it ourselves, but on the contrary, relieve and supply his wants; and whenever we have done the contrary we ought to repent, be sorry, and resolve to do so no more;—when I say, all men shall be proved actually to know and allow all these and a thousand other such rules, all of which come under these two general words made use of above, viz. *virtutes et peccata*, virtues and sins, there will be more reason for admitting these and the like, for common notions and practical principles. Yet, after all, universal consent (were there any in moral principles) to truths¹, the knowledge whereof may be attained

¹ All truths, whether intellectually necessary or (for us) contingent, are reached by the exercise of our faculties in experience; and not antecedently to, but in dependence on, the presentation of data in external or internal sense.

otherwise, would scarce prove them to be innate; which is all I contend for.

20. Nor will it be of much moment here to offer that very ready but not very material answer, viz. that the innate principles of morality may, by education, and custom, and the general opinion of those amongst whom we converse, be darkened, and at last quite worn out of the minds of men. Which assertion of theirs, if true, quite takes away the argument of universal consent, by which this opinion of innate principles is endeavoured to be proved; unless those men will think it reasonable that their private persuasions, or that of their party, should pass for universal consent;—a thing not unfrequently done, when men, presuming themselves to be the only masters of right reason, cast by the votes and opinions of the rest of mankind as not worthy the reckoning. And then their argument stands thus:—‘The principles which all mankind allow for true, are innate; those that men of right reason admit, are the principles allowed by all mankind; we, and those of our mind, are men of reason; therefore, we agreeing, our principles are innate’;—which is a very pretty way of arguing, and a short cut to infallibility. For otherwise it will be very hard to understand how there be some principles which all men do acknowledge and agree in; and yet there are none of those principles which are not, by depraved custom and ill education, blotted out of the minds of many men: which is to say, that all men admit, but yet many men do deny and dissent from them. And indeed the supposition of *such* first principles will serve us to very little purpose; and we shall be as much at a loss with as without them, if they may, by any human power—such as the will of our teachers, or opinions of our companions—be altered or lost in us: and notwithstanding all this boast of first principles and innate light, we shall be as much in the dark and uncertainty as if there were no such thing at all: it being all one to have no rule, and one that will warp any way; or amongst various and contrary rules, not to know which is the right. But concerning innate principles, I desire these men to say, whether they can or cannot, by education and custom, be blurred and blotted out; if they cannot, we must find them in all mankind

BOOK I.
 CHAP. II.
 Objection,
 Innate
 Principles
 may be
 corrupted,
 answered.

BOOK I.
CHAP. II.

alike, and they must be clear in everybody; and if they may suffer variation from adventitious notions, we must then find them clearest and most perspicuous nearest the fountain, in children and illiterate people, who have received least impression from foreign opinions. Let them take which side they please, they will certainly find it inconsistent with visible matter of fact and daily observation¹.

Contrary Principles in the World.

21. I easily grant that there are great numbers of opinions which, by men of different countries, educations, and tempers, are received and embraced as first and unquestionable principles; many whereof, both for their absurdity as well as oppositions to one another, it is impossible should be true². But yet all those propositions, how remote soever from reason, are so sacred somewhere or other, that men even of good understanding in other matters, will sooner part with their

¹ This argument against 'innate principles for determining conduct' proceeds, like his previous arguments, upon Locke's interpretation of innateness, as involving actual realisation in the consciousness of each individual from birth. But a principle may be potentially innate, and only evoked in the consciousness of the few who are highly educated, morally and intellectually. To awaken a response in individuals to the principles on which human life reposes is the aim of the higher education. From Socrates onwards this has been recognised by teachers of religion and philosophy. These 'innate' elements are not consciously apprehended by all; some of them are always dormant in some persons, or are acted on without a philosophical intelligence of their meaning. 'Children and illiterate people' cannot have this intelligence. Moral principles may be vindicated on the ground that—operative in good men, though dormant in others—they ought not to be surrendered, unless they can be shown to contradict necessities of intellect. Note that Locke's point still is,—the time and way in which

the individual becomes aware of the abstract principles of morality; not whether the moral constitution of things be not such that, at the proper time, and under the natural conditions, self-evident truths must shine forth in their self-evidence.

² It is granted even by Reid—an uncritical advocate of 'first principles'—that it cannot 'without great want of charity' be denied, that men who love truth may 'differ about first principles.' He argues, however, that nature has not left us destitute of means whereby the candid and honest part of mankind may be brought to unanimity when they happen to differ about first principles. Those principles 'which are really the dictates of common sense, and directly opposed to absurdities of opinion, will always, from the constitution of human nature, support themselves, and gain rather than lose ground among mankind. There are certain ways of reasoning about them by which those that are just and solid may be confirmed, and those that are false may be detected.' Some of those 'ways' Reid points out. See *Essays on Intellectual Powers*, VI. ch. iv.

BOOK I.
CHAP. II.
How men commonly come by their Principles.

lives, and whatever is dearest to them, than suffer themselves to doubt, or others to question, the truth of them.

22. This, however strange it may seem, is that which every day's experience confirms; and will not, perhaps, appear so wonderful, if we consider the ways and steps by which it is brought about; and how really it may come to pass, that doctrines that have been derived from no better original than the superstition of a nurse, or the authority of an old woman, may, by length of time and consent of neighbours, grow up to the dignity of principles in religion or morality. For such, who are careful (as they call it) to principle children well, (and few there be who have not a set of those principles for them, which they believe in,) instil into the unwary, and as yet unprejudiced, understanding, (for white paper¹ receives any characters,) those doctrines they would have them retain and profess. These being taught them as soon as they have any apprehension; and still as they grow up confirmed to them, either by the open profession or tacit consent of all they have to do with; or at least by those of whose wisdom, knowledge, and piety they have an opinion, who never suffer those propositions to be otherwise mentioned but as the basis and foundation on which they build their religion and manners, come, by these means, to have the reputation of unquestionable, self-evident, and innate truths².

23. To which we may add, that when men so instructed are grown up, and reflect on their own minds, they cannot find anything more ancient there than those opinions, which were taught them before their memory began to keep a register of their actions, or date the time when any new thing appeared to them; and therefore make no scruple to conclude, that those propositions of whose knowledge they can find in themselves no original, were certainly the impress of God and nature upon their minds, and not taught them by any one else. These

Principles supposed innate because we do not remember when we began to hold them.

¹ The *tabula rasa* metaphor. It is apt to suggest that we are merely passive or receptive in the acquisition of experience; and that experience is simple, and therefore incapable of critical analysis.

² But without perception of their

intellectual necessity. Note here once more the motive of Locke's attack on innate principles—to explode prejudices, dispel empty phrases, and substitute rational insight for blind dependence on authority.

they entertain and submit to, as many do to their parents with veneration; not because it is natural; nor do children do it where they are not so taught; but because, having been always so educated, and having no remembrance of the beginning of this respect, they think it is natural.

How such principles come to be held.

24. This will appear very likely, and almost unavoidable to come to pass, if we consider the nature of mankind and the constitution of human affairs; wherein most men cannot live without employing their time in the daily labours of their callings; nor be at quiet in their minds without *some* foundation or principle to rest their thoughts on¹. There is scarcely any one so floating and superficial in his understanding, who hath not some revered propositions, which are to him the principles on which he bottoms his reasonings, and by which he judgeth of truth and falsehood, right and wrong; which some, wanting skill and leisure, and others the inclination, and some being taught that they ought not to examine, there are few to be found who are not exposed by their ignorance, laziness, education, or precipitancy, to *take them upon trust*.

Further explained.

25. This is evidently the case of all children and young folk; and custom, a greater power than nature², seldom failing to make them worship for divine what she hath inured them to bow their minds and submit their understandings to, it is no wonder that grown men, either perplexed in the necessary affairs of life, or hot in the pursuit of pleasures, should *not* seriously sit down to examine their own tenets; especially when one of their principles is, that principles ought not to be questioned³. And had men leisure, parts, and will, who is there almost that dare shake the foundations of all his past thoughts and actions, and endure to bring upon himself the

¹ *The felt need for something fixed and persistent on which to rest*, in a continually changing and hazardous world, originated philosophy and sustains religion.

² Hume afterwards, like the Greek sceptics, sought to resolve all judgments about matters of fact into the natural issue of *custom*, thus making it

the supreme (physical) cause in determining our sense of the true, the beautiful, and the good.

³ Note the antithesis here between premisses accepted blindly, and that criticism of premisses which his argument against innate ideas and principles was meant to encourage. Cf. Bk. IV. ch. xx. § 2.

shame of having been a long time wholly in mistake and error? Who is there hardy enough to contend with the reproach which is everywhere prepared for those who dare venture to dissent from the received opinions of their country or party? And where is the man to be found that can patiently prepare himself to bear the name of whimsical, sceptical, or atheist; which he is sure to meet with, who does in the least scruple any of the common opinions? And he will be much more afraid to question those principles, when he shall think them, as most men do, the standards set up by God in his mind, to be the rule and touchstone of all other opinions. And what can hinder him from thinking them sacred, when he finds them the earliest of all his own thoughts, and the most revered by others?

26. It is easy to imagine how, by these means, it comes to pass that men worship the idols that have been set up in their minds¹; grow fond of the notions they have been long acquainted with there; and stamp the characters of divinity upon absurdities and errors; become zealous votaries to bulls and monkeys, and contend too, fight, and die in defence of their opinions. *Dum solos credit habendos esse deos, quos ipse colit*. For, since the reasoning faculties of the soul, which are almost constantly, though not always warily nor wisely employed, would not know how to move, for want of a foundation and footing, in most men, who through laziness or avocation do not, or for want of time, or true helps, or for other causes, cannot penetrate into the principles of knowledge, and trace truth to its fountain and original², it is natural for them, and almost unavoidable, to take up with some

¹ A reference to the *idola* of Bacon, —those phantoms of the human mind, which we are apt to prefer to the 'ideas of the divine mind' that are expressed in the laws of nature. 'Non leve quiddam interest inter humanae mentis *idola*, et divinae mentis ideas.' *Nov. Org.* i. aph. 23. See relative notes in Dr. Fowler's edition. This is one of the few allusions to Bacon in the *Essay*. His *idola*, as they are unreal ideas and false principles, are *false*

gods; and we (so far) find the true God in finding the genuine principles of physical and moral experience, and (so far) worship God by living in harmony with them.

² That is to say, indolent persons, who live thus, cannot become philosophers: the genuine principles of reason remain for them latent. They are thus ready to accept spurious ones in the form of their own prejudices.

BOOK I. —
 CHAP. II. borrowed principles; which being reputed and presumed to be the evident proofs of other things, are thought not to need any other proof themselves. Whoever shall receive any of these into his mind, and entertain them there with the reverence usually paid to principles, never venturing to examine them, but accustoming himself to believe them, because they are to be believed, may take up, from his education and the fashions of his country, any absurdity for innate principles; and by long poring on the same objects, so dim his sight as to take monsters lodged in his own brain for the images of the Deity, and the workmanship of his hands.

Principles must be examined. 27. By this progress, how many there are who arrive at principles which they believe innate may be easily observed, in the variety of opposite principles held and contended for by all sorts and degrees of men. And he that shall deny this to be the method wherein most men proceed to the assurance they have of the truth and evidence of their principles, will perhaps find it a hard matter any other way to account for the contrary tenets, which are firmly believed, confidently asserted, and which great numbers are ready at any time to seal with their blood. And, indeed, if it be the privilege of innate principles to be received upon their own authority, without examination¹, I know not what may not be believed, or how any one's principles can be questioned. If they may and ought to be examined and tried, I desire to know how first and innate principles can be tried; or at least it is reasonable to demand the *marks* and *characters* whereby the genuine innate principles may be distinguished from others: that so, amidst the great variety of pretenders, I may be kept from mistakes in so material a point as this. When this is done, I shall be ready to embrace such welcome and useful propositions; and till then I may with modesty doubt; since I fear universal consent, which is the only one produced, will scarcely prove

¹ It is the ready reception of 'customary' premisses, without criticism of their claims in reason, which makes Locke pursue with so much moral intensity this otherwise tedious argument. Accordingly, in this and the seven preceding sections, he dwells on the difficulty and danger of mistake in the *process* through which self-evident truth is realised in its self-evidence, while he overlooks the intellectual necessity and universality of the *product*, when it has at last been reached, by dint of reflective energy.

a sufficient mark to direct my choice, and assure me of any innate principles.

From what has been said, I think it past doubt, that there are no practical principles wherein all men agree; and therefore none innate¹.

¹ Although a *conscious* 'universal agreement' is necessarily the test of innateness, in Locke's meaning of 'innate,' it is not the only, nor indeed a possible, test of *virtual* innateness. Cf. Leibniz, and Reid, *ut supra*; also

Kant's test of principles that are not mere generalisations from contingent data, but derived to the mind from its own operation,—which he finds in our consciousness of their intellectual necessity and universality.

answering the terms which make up those universal propositions that are esteemed innate principles¹. One may perceive how, by degrees, afterwards, ideas come into their minds; and that they get no more, nor other, than what experience, and the observation of things that come in their way, furnish them with; which might be enough to satisfy us that they are not original characters stamped on the mind.

3. 'It is impossible for the same thing to be, and not to be,' is certainly (if there be any such) an innate *principle*. But can any one think, or will any one say, that 'impossibility' and 'identity' are two innate *ideas*? Are they such as all mankind have, and bring into the world with them? And are they those which are the first in children, and antecedent to all acquired ones? If they are innate, they must needs be so¹. Hath a child an idea of impossibility and identity, before it has of white or black, sweet or bitter? And is it from the knowledge of this principle that it concludes, that wormwood rubbed on the nipple hath not the same taste that it used to receive from thence? Is it the actual knowledge of *impossibile est idem esse, et non esse*, that makes a child distinguish between its mother and a stranger; or that makes it fond of the one and flee the other? Or does the mind regulate itself and its assent by ideas that it never yet had? Or the understanding draw conclusions from principles which it never yet knew or understood? The names *impossibility* and *identity* stand for two ideas, so far from being innate, or born with us, that I think it requires great care and attention to form them right in our understandings. They are so far from being brought into the world with us, so remote from the thoughts of infancy and childhood, that I believe, upon examination it will be found that many grown men want them².

¹ Although 'universal' propositions are *a priori* and ultimate *in rerum natura*, they are not *a priori* in the time of their conscious apprehension. Their apriority is not in time, but as conditions of the constitution of our experience of what is real, and therefore of the nature of things. The argument which runs through the First

Book continually overlooks this distinction—especially in what follows.

² The human mind proceeds *towards* universal or 'first' principles rather than *from* them, in gradually becoming conscious of the logical and metaphysical conditions that in ordinary experience are unconsciously presupposed as necessary.

CHAPTER III.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS CONCERNING INNATE PRINCIPLES, BOTH SPECULATIVE AND PRACTICAL.

BOOK I. CHAP. III. Principles not innate, unless their Ideas be innate.

I. HAD those who would persuade us that there are innate principles not taken them together in gross, but considered separately the parts out of which those propositions are made, they would not, perhaps, have been so forward to believe they were innate. Since, if the *ideas* which made up those truths were not, it was impossible that the *propositions* made up of them should be innate, or our knowledge of them be born with us. For, if the ideas be not innate, there was a time when the mind was without those principles; and then they will not be innate, but be derived from some other original. For, where the ideas themselves are not, there can be no knowledge, no assent, no mental or verbal propositions about them¹.

Ideas, especially those belonging to Principles, not born with Children.

2. If we will attentively consider new-born children, we shall have little reason to think that they bring many ideas into the world with them. For, bating perhaps some faint ideas of hunger, and thirst, and warmth, and some pains, which they may have felt in the womb, there is not the least appearance of any settled ideas at all in them; especially of *ideas*

¹ Intelligible *propositions*, in short, presuppose intelligible *terms*. The world had been perplexed, he implies, by being asked to believe propositions in which the terms were void of meaning. Hence Locke's hostility to innate propositions, as inconsistent with genuine insight, and with the consciousness which he assumes to be essential to an 'idea.' But, as one of his earliest critics remarks, 'we call ideas innate, not because we are born with an *actual notion* of all the particulars in our minds, but with a *natural facility to know them*, as soon as the things implied in the words that stand for them are presented to the understanding; and a *natural and unavoidable determination to judge them true*, as soon as we know the things themselves, or the words by which they are signified to others.' (Lee, *Anti-Septicism*, Bk. I. ch. iv.)

BOOK I. 4. If *identity* (to instance that alone) be a native impression, and consequently so clear and obvious to us that we must needs know it even from our cradles, I would gladly be resolved by any one of seven, or seventy years old, whether a man, being a creature consisting of soul and body, be the same man when his body is changed? Whether Euphorbus and Pythagoras, having had the same soul, were the same men, though they lived several ages asunder¹? Nay, whether the cock too, which had the same soul, were not the same with both of them²? Whereby, perhaps, it will appear that our idea of *sameness* is not so settled and clear as to deserve to be thought innate in us. For if those innate ideas are not clear and distinct, so as to be universally known and naturally agreed on, they cannot be subjects of universal and undoubted truths, but will be the unavoidable occasion of perpetual uncertainty. For, I suppose every one's idea of identity will not be the same that Pythagoras and thousands of his followers have. And which then shall be true? Which innate? Or are there two different ideas of identity, both innate?

5. Nor let any one think that the questions I have here proposed about the identity of man are bare empty speculations; which, if they were, would be enough to show, that there was in the understandings of men no innate idea of identity. He that shall with a little attention reflect on the resurrection, and consider that divine justice will bring to judgment, at the last day, the very same persons, to be happy or miserable in the other, who did well or ill in this life, will find it perhaps not easy to resolve with himself, what makes the same man, or wherein identity consists; and will not be forward to think he, and every one, even children themselves, have naturally a clear idea of it³.

¹ The allusion is to the Pythagorean teaching about the transmigration of souls. Locke deals with the idea of 'identity' more fully under our complex ideas, Bk. II. ch. xxvii.

² The reference is to Lucian's satire of the Pythagorean metempsychosis.

³ Locke puzzled himself about the meaning which should be expressed

by the terms '*identity*,' '*same*,' &c. Cf. Bk. II. ch. xxvii. See Bp. Butler's *Dissertation on Personal Identity* (1736), and Perronet's *Vindication* (1738), for a criticism and a defence of Locke, whose idea of sameness in persons has continued to be matter of controversy since.

6. Let us examine that principle of mathematics, viz. *that the whole is bigger than a part*. This, I take it, is reckoned amongst innate principles. I am sure it has as good a title as any to be thought so; which yet nobody can think it to be, when he considers [that] the ideas it comprehends in it, *whole* and *part*, are perfectly relative; but the positive ideas to which they properly and immediately belong are extension and number, of which alone whole and part are relations. So that if whole and part are innate ideas, extension and number must be so too; it being impossible to have an idea of a relation, without having any at all of the thing to which it belongs, and in which it is founded. Now, whether the minds of men have naturally imprinted on them the ideas of extension and number, I leave to be considered by those who are the patrons of innate principles¹.

7. That *God is to be worshipped*, is, without doubt, as great a truth as any that can enter into the mind of man, and deserves the first place amongst all practical principles. But yet it can by no means be thought innate, unless the ideas of *God* and *worship* are innate. That the idea the term worship stands for is not in the understanding of children, and a character stamped on the mind in its first original, I think will be easily granted, by any one that considers how few there be amongst grown men who have a clear and distinct notion of it. And, I suppose, there cannot be anything more ridiculous than to say, that children have this practical principle innate, 'That God is to be worshipped,' and yet that they know not what that worship of God is, which is their duty². But to pass by this.

8. If any idea can be imagined innate, the idea of *God* may, of all others³, for many reasons, be thought so; since it is

¹ Locke would account, by means of sight and touch, for the rise in consciousness of the idea of 'extension' in both of which senses concrete extensions are presented (Bk. II. ch. v); and for unity and 'number,' as modes 'suggested by every object of which we can be conscious' (Bk. II. ch. vii. § 7).

² Lord Herbert assumed it to be innate. We may be long unconscious of an idea which, when it does rise into consciousness, is perceived to be necessary and universal.

³ That the idea of God is to be regarded as innate might be maintained on other grounds than those

BOOK I. hard to conceive how there should be innate moral principles,
 CHAP. III. without an innate idea of a Deity. Without a notion of a law-maker, it is impossible to have a notion of a law, and an obligation to observe it. Besides the atheists taken notice of amongst the ancients², and left branded upon the records of history, hath not navigation discovered, in these later ages,

conceived by Locke, and in another sense of innateness than his. It is easy to show, as he does in the sequel, that the idea is obscured in many minds, and that it takes many unworthy forms. But if faith in God is virtually implied in the fundamental assumption of the constant supremacy of Order or Reason in the universe, to which man, as intelligent and responsible, responds,—then the existence of God is virtually, if unconsciously, assumed even in the faith in *physical order or natural law*, with the ideas and principles therein presupposed, on which all common life and science of nature depend—a faith which is the basis of natural religion; while faith in the ultimate supremacy of *spiritual order and moral purpose*, with their presupposed moral ideas, is the basis of spiritual or supernatural religion. Atheism is thus that negation of reason, in the universe and in us, which logically should become the speechless scepticism with which Plato deals. The necessary presuppositions of physical science, and still more the necessary presuppositions of morality, are virtually presuppositions of God's existence,—as the immanent ever active Reason that is at once the beginning and the end of philosophy as well as of religion. This whole question about innate, in the sense of presupposed absolute, principles, thus becomes the religious question in its ultimate intellectual form. But this is not Locke's point of view. With him the existence of God is a thesis to be proved; not a pre-

supposition, apart from which nothing else can be proved—the ultimate ground of any explanation of the phenomena of the universe into which we are born, and of us who are born into it.

For Locke's account of man's idea and knowledge of God, in addition to §§ 8–18 in this chapter, see Bk. II. ch. xv. §§ 2, 12; xxiii. §§ 21, 33–36; Bk. IV. ch. x; also Letter to Collins, June 29, 1704, as to how far we can interpret the universe ultimately in terms of human consciousness.

² Locke is apt to accept without criticism the crude reports of travellers, who were often unable to interpret the languages of the nations they described, and thus, with an uncharacteristic deference to authority, he maintains that whole nations exist to whom the ideas of God and a future life are strange. Yet while, on this ground, he here denies the innateness of these ideas, he elsewhere seeks to show that God's existence is demonstrable—'as certain as any conclusion in pure mathematics' (Bk. IV. ch. x). Moreover, he nowhere takes sufficient account of the very different degrees in which the complex idea of God is developed in different persons, and of the various phases assumed by this, the deepest and most comprehensive of all the presuppositions of our real experience. To presuppose the rationality of experience, as all reasoning about reality must do, is to presuppose the *immanent* existence or presence of God.

whole nations, at the bay of Soldania¹, in Brazil², [in Boranday,] and in the Caribbee islands, &c., amongst whom there was to be found no notion of a God, no religion? Nicholaus del Techo⁴, in *Literis ex Paraquaria, de Caignuarum Conversione*, has these words: *Reperi eam gentem nullum nomen habere quod Deum, et hominis animam significet; nulla sacra habet, nulla idola.* [⁵ These are instances of nations where uncultivated nature has been left to itself, without the help of letters and discipline, and the improvements of arts and sciences. But there are others to be found who have enjoyed these in a very great measure, who yet, for want of a due application of their thoughts this way, want the idea and knowledge of God. It will, I doubt not, be a surprise to others, as it was to me; to find the Siamites of this number. But for this, let them consult the King of France's late envoy thither⁶, who gives no better account of the Chinese themselves. And⁷ if we will not believe La Loubère, the missionaries of China, even the Jesuits themselves, the great encomiasts of the Chinese, do all to a man agree, and will convince us, that the sect of the *literari*, or learned, keeping to the old religion of China, and the ruling party there, are all of them

¹ Roe, in Thevenot's *Relation de divers Voyages Curieux*. Sir Thomas Roe, a distinguished diplomatist, was King James's ambassador to the Great Mogul in 1614–18. The report of his experience there appeared in 1665, as an appendix to the translation of Pietro della Valle's travels, and again in Churchill's *Collection*. He died in 1644.

² Jo. de Lery, p. 16, who travelled in Brazil in the end of the sixteenth century, and wrote a history of that country.

³ Added in fourth edition. Martinière §§ 1; Terry, *Voyage to the Mogul*, 1715 and 1717; Ovington §§ 11. (Ovington's *Voyage to Surat* in 1689.)

⁴ Nicholas de Techo, a Jesuit missionary, who wrote an account of Paraguay and other countries in South America, where he lived for twenty-

five years. He reports many particulars of the customs of the savage Indians, in his Letters from Paraguay, and as to the conversion of the Indians of that South American province. See Churchill's *Collection*, vol. iv.

⁵ This and the next three sentences added in fourth edition. Locke again trusts too much to the statements of strangers imperfectly acquainted with the native languages, ignorant too of the sciences of comparative religion and comparative philology, and thus apt to misinterpret the imperfectly developed and inarticulate beliefs of savages.

⁶ La Loubère, *Du Royaume de Siam*, tom. i. c. 9, § 15; c. 20, §§ 4–22; c. 22, § 6, and c. 23. M. de la Loubère (1642–1729) was the envoy of Louis XIV to Siam in 1687.

⁷ This and the next sentence added in Coste's French Version.

BOOK I. atheists. Vid. Navarette¹, in the *Collection of Voyages*, vol. i.,
 and *Historia Cultus Sinensium*.] And perhaps, if we should
 CHAP. III. with attention mind the lives and discourses of people not so
 far off, we should have too much reason to fear, that many, in
 more civilized countries, have no very strong and clear im-
 pressions of a Deity upon their minds, and that the complaints
 of atheism made from the pulpit are not without reason. And
 though only some profligate wretches own it too barefacedly
 now; yet perhaps we should hear more than we do of it from
 others, did not the fear of the magistrate's sword, or their
 neighbour's censure, tie up people's tongues; which, were the
 apprehensions of punishment or shame taken away, would as
 openly proclaim their atheism as their lives do².

The name of God not universal or obscure in meaning.
 9. But had all mankind everywhere a notion of a God,
 (whereof yet history tells us the contrary,) it would not from
 thence follow, that the idea of him was innate. For, though
 no nation were to be found without a name, and some few

¹ A Dominican friar, sent in 1646 by his order as a missionary to the Philippine Islands, and afterwards to China, where he spent more than twenty years in the service of Christianity. His learned account of the Chinese, in Spanish, appears in a translation in Churchill's *Collection*.

² 'I think' (Locke afterwards says, in his *Third Letter* to Stillingfleet, p. 447), 'I think that the "universal consent" of mankind as to the being of a God amounts to thus much—that the vastly greater majority have, in all ages of the world, actually believed a God; that the majority of the remaining part have not actually disbelieved it; and consequently those who have actually opposed the belief of a God have truly been very few. . . . This is all the universal consent which truth of matter of fact will allow, and therefore all that can be made use of to prove a God. . . . But a consent of every man, even to a man, in all ages and countries, this would make it either no argument or an unnecessary one.

For, if anyone deny a God, such perfect universality of consent is destroyed; and if nobody does deny a God, what need of arguments to convince atheists? what need of arguments against a fault from which mankind are so wholly free? If you say (as I doubt not but you will) that they have had atheists in the world, then your lordship's "universal consent" reduces itself to only a great majority; and I have not said one word that does in the least invalidate *this* argument for a God. The argument I was upon there was, to show that the idea of God was not innate; and to my purpose this sufficed—if there were but a less number found who had no idea of God than your lordship will allow there have been of professed atheists; for *whatsoever is innate must be universal in the strictest sense; one exception is a sufficient proof against it.*—This argument is good against the explicit, but not against the implicit innateness of the ideas of God and religion.—Locke elsewhere argues against toleration of atheists.

dark notions of him¹, yet that would not prove them to be natural impressions on the mind; no more than the names of fire, or the sun, heat, or number, do prove the ideas they stand for to be innate; because the names of those things, and the ideas of them, are so universally received and known amongst mankind. Nor, on the contrary, is the want of such a name, or the absence of such a notion out of men's minds, any argument against the being of a God; any more than it would be a proof that there was no loadstone in the world, because a great part of mankind had neither a notion of any such thing nor a name for it; or be any show of argument to prove that there are no distinct and various species of angels, or intelligent beings above us, because we have no ideas of such distinct species, or names for them. For, men being furnished with words, by the common language of their own countries, can scarce avoid having some kind of ideas of those things whose names those they converse with have occasion frequently to mention to them. And if they carry with it the notion of excellency, greatness, or something extraordinary; if apprehension and concernment accompany it; if the fear of absolute and irresistible power set it on upon the mind,—the idea is likely to sink the deeper, and spread the further; especially if it be such an idea as is agreeable to the common light of reason², and naturally deducible from every part of our knowledge, as that of a God is. For the visible marks of extraordinary wisdom and power appear so plainly in all the works of the creation, that a rational creature, who will but seriously reflect on them, cannot miss the discovery of a Deity. And the influence that the discovery of such a Being must necessarily have on the minds of all that have but once heard of it is so great, and carries such a weight of thought and communication with it, that it seems stranger to me that

¹ For the origin and constitution of the complex idea of God, see Bk. II. ch. xxiii. §§ 33–35. The idea is found in very various stages of development, and with Locke himself is external and mechanical, excluding immanence in the actuality of the world of experi-

ence. It is the deistical idea, in short.

² 'Common light of reason' is elsewhere 'intuition' (Bk. IV. ch. ii. § 1), 'natural revelation' (Bk. IV. ch. xix. § 4), and 'the candle of the Lord set up by God Himself in men's minds' (ch. iii. 20).

BOOK I. a whole nation of men should be anywhere found so brutish
 as to want the notion of a God, than that they should be
 CHAP. III. without any notion of numbers, or fire¹.

Idea of
 God and
 idea of
 Fire.

10. The name of God being once mentioned in any part of the world, to express a superior, powerful, wise, invisible Being, the suitableness of such a notion to the principles of common reason, and the interest men will always have to mention it often, must necessarily spread it far and wide; and continue it down to all generations: though yet the general reception of this name, and some imperfect and unsteady notions conveyed thereby to the unthinking part of mankind, prove not the idea to be innate; but only that they who made the discovery had made a right use of their reason, thought maturely of the causes of things, and traced them to their original; from whom other less considering people having once received so important a notion, it could not easily be lost again².

Idea of
 God not
 innate.

11. This is all could be inferred from the notion of a God, were it to be found universally in all the tribes of mankind, and generally acknowledged, by men grown to maturity in all countries. For the generality of the acknowledging of a God, as I imagine, is extended no further than that; which, if it be sufficient to prove the idea of God innate, will as well prove the idea of fire innate; since I think it may be truly said, that there is not a person in the world who has a notion of a God, who has not also the idea of fire. I doubt not but if a colony of young children should be placed in an island where no fire was, they would certainly neither have any notion of such

¹ Here and elsewhere he speaks of God as one object among many (fire, loadstone, &c.), rather than as unique, and incapable of being classed—the perfect ever-active Reason in which all finite persons live and have their being, but in a way that is somehow consistent with their individuality and moral freedom. ‘Rien de plus beau,’ says Leibniz, in reference to this section, ‘et de plus à mon gré, que cette suite des pensées.’ But he adds—‘Je dirais seulement ici que l’auteur, parlant des plus simples lumières de la raison qui s’accordent avec l’idée de Dieu, et de

ce qui en découle naturellement, ne paraît guere s’éloigner de mon sens sur les vérités innées.’ (*Nouv. Ess.* Liv. I. ch. iii.)

² Although the full presence of the complex idea of Deity in individuals presupposes their spiritual activity, it may, when it does arise, show by its constitution that it cannot be analysed into accidents of experience—that, on the contrary, it was a sustaining, organising faith, necessarily latent in the experience of those who were least conscious of it—manifest in a degree even in their habitual trust in natural order.

a thing, nor name for it, how generally soever it were received and known in all the world besides; and perhaps too their apprehensions would be as far removed from any name, or notion, of a God¹, till some one amongst them had employed his thoughts to inquire into the constitution and causes of things, which would easily lead him to the notion of a God; which having once taught to others, reason, and the natural propensity of their own thoughts, would afterwards propagate, and continue amongst them².

BOOK I.
 CHAP. III.

12. Indeed it is urged, that it is suitable to the goodness of God, to imprint upon the minds of men characters and notions of himself, and not to leave them in the dark and doubt in so grand a concernment; and also, by that means, to secure to himself the homage and veneration due from so intelligent a creature as man; and therefore he has done it³.

Suitable to
 God's
 goodness,
 that all
 Men
 should
 have an
 Idea of
 Him,
 therefore
 naturally
 imprinted
 by Him,
 answered.

This argument, if it be of any force, will prove much more than those who use it in this case expect from it. For, if we may conclude that God hath done for men all that men shall judge is best for them, because it is suitable to his goodness so to do, it will prove, not only that God has imprinted on the minds of men an idea of himself, but that he hath plainly stamped there, in fair characters, all that men ought to know or believe of him; all that they ought to do in obedience to

¹ But are the ideas of ‘fire’ and of ‘God,’ or supreme active Reason, when we do have them, alike, in being intellectually necessary to the philosophic conception of the universe? Are they equally implied in the logic of natural and moral experience? Locke himself recognises the difference, in holding as he does that the existence of God is as demonstrable as any conclusion in pure mathematics, which the existence of fire is not.

² The idea appears in degrees of development so various that the term ‘God’ suggests very different ideas in different ages and nations, as well as in individual minds in the same age or nation.

³ The argument for the existence, if not for the complex idea, of God,

founded on the ‘common consent of mankind,—the *consensus gentium* as the *vox naturae*, formulated in the *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*,—cannot claim the weight which might be due to the inevitable conscious conviction of every human being, children and adults, savages and philosophers; for in that case atheists and agnostics would be impossible phenomena, and arguments would be superseded. It can only claim the deference proper to convictions commonly experienced, in successive ages and various nations, to which Cicero and the Fathers of the Church appealed; and not even this if, as Reid puts it, ‘we could show some prejudice as universal as that consent is, which might be the cause of it.’

BOOK I. his will; and that he hath given them a will and affections
 CHAP. III. conformable to it. This, no doubt, every one will think better for men, than that they should, in the dark, grope after knowledge, as St. Paul tells us all nations did after God (Acts xvii. 27); than that their wills should clash with their understandings, and their appetites cross their duty. The Romanists say it is best for men, and so suitable to the goodness of God, that there should be an infallible judge of controversies on earth; and therefore there is one. And I, by the same reason, say it is better for men that every man himself should be infallible. I leave them to consider, whether, by the force of this argument, they shall think that every man *is* so. I think it a very good argument to say,—the infinitely wise God hath made it so; and therefore it is best. But it seems to me a little too much confidence of our own wisdom to say,—‘I think it best; and therefore God hath made it so.’ And in the matter in hand, it will be in vain to argue from such a topic, that God hath done so, when certain experience shows us that he hath not¹. But the goodness of God hath not been wanting to men, without such original impressions of knowledge or ideas stamped on the mind; since he hath furnished man with those faculties² which will serve for the sufficient discovery of all things requisite to the end of such a being; and I doubt not but to show, that a man, by the right use of his natural abilities², may, without any innate principles, attain a knowledge of a God, and other things that concern him. God having endued man with those faculties of knowledge which he hath², was no more obliged by his goodness to plant those innate notions in his mind, than that, having given him reason, hands, and materials, he should build him bridges or houses,—which some people in the world, however of good parts, do either totally want, or are but ill provided of, as well as others are wholly without ideas of God and principles of morality, or at least have but very ill ones; the reason in both cases being, that they never employed their

¹ ‘Things are what they are, and are not other things; why therefore should we desire to be deceived?’

² This so far recognises *potential*

innateness, although it does not take account of the necessary rational implicates in the ‘natural faculties,’ manifested when they operate adequately.

parts, faculties, and powers industriously that way, but contented themselves with the opinions, fashions, and things of their country, as they found them, without looking any further. Had you or I been born at the Bay of Soldania, possibly our thoughts and notions had not exceeded those brutish ones of the Hottentots that inhabit there. And had the Virginia king Apochancana been educated in England, he had been perhaps as knowing a divine, and as good a mathematician as any in it; the difference between him and a more improved Englishman lying barely in this, that the exercise of his faculties was bounded within the ways, modes, and notions of his own country, and never directed to any other or further inquiries. And if he had not any idea of a God, it was only because he pursued not those thoughts that would have led him to it.

13. I grant that if there were any ideas to be found imprinted on the minds of men, we have reason to expect it should be the notion of his Maker, as a mark God set on his own workmanship, to mind man of his dependence and duty; and that herein should appear the first¹ instances of human knowledge. But how late is it before any such notion is discoverable in children? And when we find it there, how much more does it resemble the opinion and notion of the teacher, than represent the true God? He that shall observe in children the progress whereby their minds attain the knowledge they have, will think that the objects they do first and most familiarly converse with are those that make the first impressions on their understandings; nor will he find the least footsteps of any other. It is easy to take notice how their thoughts enlarge themselves, only as they come to be acquainted with a greater variety of sensible objects; to retain the ideas of them in their memories; and to get the skill to compound and enlarge them, and several ways put them together. How, by these means, they come to frame in their minds an idea men have of a Deity, I shall hereafter show².

¹ That is, ‘first’ in time; not the apriority, in the very nature of experience and of things, which consists with late and imperfect manifestation

in the individual mind, or with no manifestation at all in some minds.

² See Bk. II. ch. xxiii. §§ 33-36; Bk. IV. ch. x.

BOOK I. 14. Can it be thought that the ideas men have of God are the
 CHAP. III. characters and marks of himself, engraven in their minds by his
 Contrary own finger, when we see that, in the same country, under one
 and incon- and the same name, men have far different, nay often contrary
 sistent ideas of and inconsistent ideas and conceptions of him? Their agreeing
 God under in a name, or sound, will scarce prove an innate notion of him.
 the same name. 15. What true or tolerable notion of a Deity could they
 Gross have, who acknowledged and worshipped hundreds? Every
 ideas of deity that they owned above one was an infallible evidence
 God. of their ignorance of Him, and a proof that they had no true
 notion of God, where unity, infinity, and eternity were ex-
 cluded. To which, if we add their gross conceptions of corpo-
 reity, expressed in their images and representations of their
 deities; the amours, marriages, copulations, lusts, quarrels, and
 other mean qualities attributed by them to their gods; we shall
 have little reason to think that the heathen world, i. e. the
 greatest part of mankind, had such ideas of God in their minds
 as he himself, out of care that they should not be mistaken
 about him, was author of. And this universality of consent,
 so much argued, if it prove any native impressions, it will
 be only this:—that God imprinted on the minds of all men
 speaking the same language, a *name* for himself, but not
 any *idea*; since those people who agreed in the name, had,
 at the same time, far different apprehensions about the thing
 signified. If they say that the variety of deities worshipped
 by the heathen world were but figurative ways of expressing
 the several attributes of that incomprehensible Being, or
 several parts of his providence, I answer: what they might
 be in the original I will not here inquire; but that they were
 so in the thoughts of the vulgar I think nobody will affirm.
 And he that will consult the voyage of the Bishop of Beryte¹,
 c. 13, (not to mention other testimonies,) will find that the
 theology of the Siamites professedly owns a plurality of
 gods: or, as the Abbé de Choisy more judiciously remarks
 in his *Journal du Voyage de Siam*², 177, it consists properly
 in acknowledging no God at all.

¹ The Bishop of Berytus's land him. See *Journal des Savans*, v. i.
 journey, through India, into Siam, p. 591.
 written by a priest who went with

² In 1585-86.

BOOK I. 16. If it be said, that wise men of all nations came to have
 CHAP. III. true conceptions of the unity and infinity of the Deity, I grant
 Idea of God not innate although wise men of all nations come to have it.
 it. But then this,

First, excludes universality of consent in anything but the
 name; for those wise men being very few, perhaps one of
 a thousand, this universality¹ is very narrow.

Secondly, it seems to me plainly to prove, that the truest
 and best notions men have of God² were not imprinted, but
 acquired by thought and meditation, and a right use of their
 faculties³: since the wise and considerate men of the world,
 by a right and careful employment of their thoughts and
 reason, attained true notions in this as well as other things;
 whilst the lazy and inconsiderate part of men, making far the
 greater number, took up their notions by chance, from common
 tradition and vulgar conceptions, without much beating their
 heads about them. And if it be a reason to think the notion
 of God innate, because all wise men had it, virtue too must be
 thought innate; for that also wise men have always had.

17. This was evidently the case of all Gentilism. Nor hath
 even amongst Jews, Christians, and Mahometans, who acknow-
 ledged but one God, this doctrine, and the care taken in those
 nations to teach men to have true notions of a God, prevailed
 so far as to make men to have the same and the true ideas of
 him. How many even amongst us, will be found upon in-
 quiry to fancy him in the shape of a man sitting in heaven;
 and to have many other absurd and unfit conceptions of him?
 Christians as well as Turks have had whole sects owning and
 contending earnestly for it,—that the Deity was corporeal,
 and of human shape: and though we find few now amongst us
 who profess themselves *Anthropomorphites*, (though some I have
 met with that own it,) yet I believe he that will make it his
 business may find amongst the ignorant and uninstructed

¹ That is, patent or conscious, not
 latent or unconscious, universality.
 The process of *making patent* may cost
 much reflective effort on the part of
 the individual theologian or philo-
 sopher.

he has here in view. It is the existence
 of a Supreme Mind that he elsewhere
 undertakes to 'demonstrate.' Bk. IV.
 ch. x.

² It is not the 'existence' of God,
 but the notions men have of the sort of
 being that exists under that name, that

³ Locke's 'innate ideas' are sup-
 posed by him to have been originally
 'imprinted' consciously in each man at
 birth, and so *not* 'acquired by the use
 of his faculties' in experience.

BOOK I. Christians many of that opinion. Talk but with country
 CHAP. III. people, almost of any age, or young people almost of any
 condition, and you shall find that, though the name of God
 be frequently in their mouths, yet the notions they apply this
 name to are so odd, low, and pitiful, that nobody can imagine
 they were taught by a rational man; much less that they were
 characters written by the finger of God himself. Nor do I
 see how it derogates more from the goodness of God, that he
 has given us minds unfurnished with these ideas of himself,
 than that he hath sent us into the world with bodies un-
 clothed; and that there is no art or skill born with us. For,
 being fitted with faculties to attain these, it is want of industry
 and consideration in us, and not of bounty in him, if we have
 them not. It is as certain that there is a God, as that the
 opposite angles made by the intersection of two straight lines
 are equal¹. There was never any rational creature that set
 himself sincerely to examine the truth of these propositions
 that could fail to assent to them; though yet it be past doubt
 that there are many men, who, having not applied their thoughts
 that way, are ignorant both of the one and the other. If any
 one think fit to call this (which is the utmost of its extent)
universal consent, such an one I easily allow²; but such an
 universal consent as this proves not the idea of God, any
 more than it does the idea of such angles, innate.

If the Idea of God be not innate, no other can be supposed innate.

18. Since then though the knowledge of a God be the
 most natural discovery of human reason, yet the idea of him
 is not innate, as I think is evident from what has been said;
 I imagine there will be scarce any other idea found that
 can pretend to it. Since if God hath set any impression, any
 character, on the understanding of men, it is most reasonable
 to expect it should have been some clear and uniform idea of
 Himself; as far as our weak capacities were capable to receive
 so incomprehensible and infinite an object. But our minds
 being at first void of that idea which we are most concerned

¹ While he thus acknowledges the effort is inconsistent with his idea of
 mathematical certainty to which we innateness.
 may ultimately rise in our search after
² This is really a concession of
 God, he rejects innateness in the 'innate principles' and 'universal con-
 knowledge and idea, because it is only sent,' in the only meaning of 'innate-
 after effort that we rise to it, and this ness' which needs to be considered.

BOOK I. to have, it is a strong presumption against all other innate
 CHAP. III. characters. I must own, as far as I can observe, I can find
 none, and would be glad to be informed by any other.

19. I confess there is another idea which would be of Idea of
 general use for mankind to have, as it is of general talk as if Substance
 they had it; and that is the idea of *substance*; which not innate.
 neither have nor can have by sensation or reflection¹. If
 nature took care to provide us any ideas, we might well expect
 they should be such as by our own faculties we cannot procure
 to ourselves; but we see, on the contrary, that since, by those
 ways whereby other ideas are brought into our minds, this
 is not, we have no such *clear* idea at all²; and therefore
 signify nothing by the word *substance* but only an uncertain
 supposition³ of we know not what, i. e. of something whereof

¹ See Bk. II. ch. xiii. §§ 17-20; ch. xxiii. *passim*, for Locke's account of our idea of substance, our ideas of particular substances, and how those ideas are formed.

² Stillingfleet, assuming that Locke rested all certainty on ideas that are 'clear and distinct,' alleged that, in denying that we have a 'clear' idea of substance, he 'excludes the notion out of rational discourse,—a charge, 'which,' Locke replies, 'concerns not me, for I lay not all foundation of certainty as to matters of faith upon *clear and distinct* ideas. . . . Of substance I do not say that we have any clear or distinct idea; but barely that we take it to be something, we know not what.' (*Third Letter*, pp. 381, &c.) In fact we can have no positive idea of any substance abstracted from all its phenomena: in its perceived phenomena the substance is partially manifested, and we can say of it that it is *so far* what it is thus perceived to be.

³ 'Uncertain' may here mean a supposition that, taken abstractly, is vague and obscure, although it is practically equivalent to the grammatical rule that an adjective presupposes a substan-

tive. 'There are multitudes of things,' Stillingfleet objects, 'which we are not able to conceive, and yet it is not allowed us to *suppose* what we think fit upon that account.' 'It does not therefore follow,' Locke answers, 'that we may not with certainty *suppose* or *infer* that which is an undeniable consequence of such inability to conceive, or repugnancy to our conceptions. . . . Your lordship grounds the idea of substance upon *reason*, or because it is a repugnancy to our just conceptions of things that modes or accidents should subsist by themselves; and I conclude the same thing. What the difference of certainty is from a repugnancy to our conceptions, and from our not being able to conceive, I am not acute enough to discern.' (*Third Letter*, pp. 375, &c.; also *First Letter*, pp. 27, &c.) Locke offers no proof of this repugnancy; nor can any proof of it be given, if it is a first principle. But he elsewhere 'agrees' with one of his correspondents, that 'the ideas of the modes and actions (i. e. phenomena) of substances are usually in men's minds *before* the idea of substance itself.' (*Letter to Samuel Bold*, 15 May, 1699.)

BOOK I. we have no [particular distinct positive] idea, which we
 CHAP. III. take to be the *substratum*, or support, of those ideas we
 do know².

No Pro-
 positions
 can be
 innate,
 since no
 Ideas are
 innate.

20. Whatever then we talk of innate, either speculative or practical, principles, it may with as much probability be said, that a man hath £100 sterling in his pocket, and yet denied that he hath there either penny, shilling, crown, or other coin out of which the sum is to be made up; as to think that certain *propositions* are innate when the *ideas* about which they are can by no means be supposed to be so³. The general reception and assent that is given doth not at all prove, that the ideas expressed in them are innate; for in many cases, however the ideas came there, the assent to words expressing the agreement or disagreement of such ideas, will necessarily follow. Every one that hath a true idea of *God* and *worship*, will assent to this proposition, 'That God is to be worshipped,' when expressed in a language he understands; and every rational man that hath not thought on it to-day, may be ready to assent to this proposition to-morrow; and yet millions of men may be well supposed to want one or both

¹ Added in *fourth* edition, to meet objections of Stillingfleet.

² Regarded as a mere datum of sense, added to the other sense data which constitute the 'qualities' of a thing, 'substance' would be a meaningless term; and so 'by those ways whereby ideas are brought into our minds, this is not.' But he acknowledges elsewhere that an 'obscure' concept of substance (not an idea-image) is *necessarily* formed in the human mind. 'I never said,' he tells Stillingfleet, 'that (complex) ideas of relations, such as that of substance, come in as simple ideas of sensation or reflection. I never denied that the mind could form for itself ideas of relation, and that it is obliged to do so. . . . I conclude there is substance, because we cannot conceive how qualities should subsist by themselves. . . . Sensible qualities carry the supposition of substance along with

them, but not intromitted by the senses with them. . . . By carrying with them a supposition, I mean that sensible qualities *imply* a substratum to exist in.' (*Third Letter* to Stillingfleet.) Substance, in short, is the concrete permanent in changing phenomena: these are correlatives, neither intelligible without the other,—which Locke seems to imply, though his language is inadequate. When he denies that we have an idea of substance, he uses idea for mental *image*, and so in its anti-Platonic meaning.

³ That is to say, all propositions presuppose terms. But there may be an innate intellectual obligation to perceive relations among those ideas that are themselves data of experience, e.g. to recognise necessary causal relation between sense-given sequences. Connection of ideas might be thus innate, although the connected ideas are not.

those ideas to-day. For, if we will allow savages, and most country people, to have ideas of God and worship, (which conversation with them will not make one forward to believe,) yet I think few children can be supposed to have those ideas, which therefore they must begin to have some time or other; and then they will also begin to assent to that proposition, and make very little question of it ever after. But such an assent upon hearing, no more proves the *ideas* to be innate, than it does that one born blind (with cataracts which will be couched to-morrow) had the innate ideas of the sun, or light, or saffron, or yellow; because, when his sight is cleared, he will certainly assent to this proposition, 'That the sun is lucid, or that saffron is yellow.' And therefore, if such an assent upon hearing cannot prove the ideas innate, it can much less the *propositions* made up of those ideas¹. If they have any innate ideas, I would be glad to be told what, and how many, they are.

[21.² To which let me add: if there be any innate ideas, any ideas in the mind which the mind does not actually think on, they must be lodged in the memory; and from thence must be brought into view by remembrance; i. e. must be known, when they are remembered, to have been perceptions in the mind before; unless remembrance can be without remembrance. For, to remember is to perceive anything with memory, or with a consciousness that it was perceived or known before. Without this, whatever idea comes into the mind is new, and not remembered; this consciousness of its having been in the mind before, being that which distinguishes remembering from all other ways of thinking. Whatever idea was never *perceived* by the mind was never in the mind. Whatever idea is in the mind, is, either an actual perception, or else, having been an actual perception, is so in the mind that, by the memory, it can be made an actual perception again³. Whenever there is

¹ This loses sight of the distinction between propositions which, after they emerge in consciousness, are seen to be eternally and absolutely, and those that seem to be only temporarily and conditionally true; to which last category Locke himself refers all proposi-

tions concerning matters of fact, except the existence of God.

² This section was added in the second edition.

³ Here Locke grants that our acquired knowledge exists in a latent or unconscious state, during the intervals

BOOK I. the actual perception of any idea without memory, the idea
 CHAP. III. appears perfectly new and unknown before to the understanding. Whenever the memory brings any idea into actual view, it is with a consciousness that it had been there before, and was not wholly a stranger to the mind¹. Whether this be not so, I appeal to every one's observation. And then I desire an instance of an idea, pretended to be innate, which (before any impression of it by ways hereafter to be mentioned) any one could revive and remember, as an idea he had formerly known; without which consciousness of a former perception there is no remembrance; and whatever idea comes into the mind without *that* consciousness is not remembered, or comes not out of the memory, nor can be said to be in the mind before that appearance. For what is not either actually in view or in the memory, is in the mind no way at all, and is all one as if it had never been there². Suppose a child had the use of his eyes till he knows and distinguishes colours; but then cataracts shut the windows, and he is forty or fifty years perfectly in the dark; and in that time perfectly loses all memory of the ideas of colours he once had. This was the case of a blind man I once talked with, who lost his sight by the small-pox when he was a child, and had no more notion of colours than one born blind. I ask whether any one can say this man had then any ideas of colours in his mind, any more than one born blind? And I think nobody will say that either of them had in his mind any ideas of colours at all. His cataracts are couched, and then he has the ideas (which he remembers not) of colours, *de novo*, by his restored sight, conveyed to his mind, and that without any consciousness of a former acquaintance. And these now he can revive and call to mind in the dark. In this case all these ideas of colours,

in which it is not actually and consciously present. He gives no sufficient reason for confining latency to *acquired* knowledge, thus excluding latent reason, and apriority in the nature of things. Acquired ideas, he says, are either actual, i.e. conscious, perceptions, or latent power of memory to re-perceive.

¹ This suggests Plato's theory, that our knowledge of those truths which, when awakened in us, are *seen to be intellectually necessary*, is of the nature of *reminiscence*; though unaccompanied by the recognition of them as formerly ours of which we are conscious in ordinary memory.

² This is a dogmatic assumption.

which, when out of view, can be revived with a consciousness of a former acquaintance, being thus in the memory, are said to be in the mind. The use I make of this is,—that whatever idea, being not actually in view, is in the mind, is there only by being in the memory; and if it be not in the memory, it is not in the mind; and if it be in the memory, it cannot by the memory be brought into actual view without a perception that it comes out of the memory; which is this, that it had been known before, and is now remembered. If therefore there be any innate ideas, they must be in the memory, or else nowhere in the mind; and if they be in the memory, they can be revived without any impression from without; and whenever they are brought into the mind they are remembered, i.e. they bring with them a perception of their not being wholly new to it. This being a constant and distinguishing difference between what is, and what is not in the memory, or in the mind;—that what is not in the memory, whenever it appears there, appears perfectly new and unknown before; and what is in the memory, or in the mind, whenever it is suggested by the memory, appears not to be new, but the mind finds it in itself, and knows it was there before. By this it may be tried whether there be any innate ideas in the mind before impression from sensation or reflection. I would fain meet with the man who, when he came to the use of reason, or at any other time, remembered any of them; and to whom, after he was born, they were never new. If any one will say, there are ideas in the mind that are *not* in the memory, I desire him to explain himself, and make what he says intelligible¹.]

22. Besides what I have already said, there is another reason why I doubt that neither these nor any other principles are innate. I that am fully persuaded that the infinitely wise God made all things in perfect wisdom, cannot satisfy myself why he should be supposed to print upon the

¹ What Locke had to disprove was the alleged fact, that there are ideas and principles contained in knowledge which are seen on reflection to be intellectually necessary to its constitution, and in this respect to be not

'wholly new,' while they are not recognised because formerly experienced, as in memory, and are therefore to be spoken of as 'reminiscences' only by a metaphor.

BOOK I.
CHAP. III. minds of men some universal principles; whereof those that are pretended innate, and concern *speculation*, are of no great use¹; and those that concern *practice*, not self-evident²; and neither of them distinguishable³ from some other truths not allowed to be innate. For, to what purpose should characters be graven on the mind by the finger of God, which are not clearer there than those which are afterwards introduced, or cannot be distinguished from them³? If any one thinks there are such innate ideas and propositions, which by their clearness and usefulness are distinguishable from all that is adventitious in the mind and acquired, it will not be a hard matter for him to tell us *which they are*⁴; and then every one will be a fit judge whether they be so or no. Since if there be such innate ideas and impressions, plainly different from all other perceptions and knowledge, every one will find it true in himself. Of the evidence of these supposed innate maxims, I have spoken already: of their usefulness I shall have occasion to speak more hereafter⁵.

Difference of Men's Discoveries depends upon the different Application of

23. To conclude: some ideas forwardly offer themselves to all men's understanding; and some sorts of truths result from any ideas, as soon as the mind puts them into propositions⁶: other truths require a train of ideas placed in order, a due comparing of them, and deductions made with attention, before they can be discovered and assented to⁷. Some of

¹ Nature, as Leibniz remarks, has not *uselessly* given herself the trouble of impressing upon us innate principles; for without them there would be no means of arriving at actual knowledge in demonstration, or at the reason of facts, and we should have only animal experiences. We build on those (innate) general maxims as we do on a suppressed premiss when we reason in enthymeme, when it is always true that the force of the conclusion is determined by the latent premiss. There is latent principle, too, in all reasoning about the future. Why should the future resemble the past? Not because it has always done so; this would involve the contradic-

tion that the future is already past, while of the future, as such, we can never have had any experience.

² Incompletely evidenced, or merely probable, propositions are those with which human life is mainly concerned, according to Locke.

³ On the *criteria* of the truths in question, see note 3, p. 80.

⁴ It is the permanent task of philosophy to evolve them from the experience in which they are implicitly contained, and thus to reach a distinct consciousness of them in their organic unity.

⁵ Bk. IV. ch. vii.

⁶ Self-evident truths.

⁷ It must never be forgotten that

the first sort, because of their general and easy reception, have been mistaken for innate: but the truth is, ideas and notions are no more born with us than arts and sciences; though some of them indeed offer themselves to our faculties more readily than others; and therefore are more generally received: though that too be according as the organs of our bodies and powers of our minds happen to be employed; God having fitted men with faculties and means to discover, receive, and retain truths, according as they are employed. The great difference that is to be found in the notions of mankind is, from the different use they put their faculties to¹. Whilst some (and those the most) taking things upon trust, misemploy their power of assent, by lazily enslaving their minds to the dictates and dominion of others, in doctrines which it is their duty carefully to examine, and not blindly, with an implicit faith, to swallow; others, employing their thoughts only about some few things, grow acquainted sufficiently with them, attain great degrees of knowledge in them, and are ignorant of all other, having never let their thoughts loose in the search of other inquiries². Thus, that the three angles of a triangle are quite equal to two right ones is a truth

Locke's method is chronological—i. e. the historical method—that from the outset he waives the transcendent questions that refer to Being, and the ultimate principles presupposed in mental operations—that he assumes without criticism the possibility of an experience of what is real, and the premisses which are necessary for demonstrating the existence of God. It was by the counter assumption of 'innate ideas and principles'—not acquired in the methodical exercise of our faculties, but so introduced consciously into each mind at birth as to be independent of the circumstances and experience of individuals—that, as it seemed to him, men had been losing themselves 'in the ocean of Being,' instead of beginning tentatively at the other end, among the facts presented in experience.

¹ Locke dreads innateness—that is,

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the sort of innateness which necessarily implies *consciousness of the innate*—because it is apt to supersede the exercise of our faculties. This the only innateness worth inquiring about has no such tendency, consciousness of the 'innate' elements in human knowledge depending upon the active exercise of the individual faculties; and distinct recognition of them in their universal or philosophic form depending too upon the exercise of our *higher* faculties.

² In this sentence we find the moral of the prolonged argument of the First Book—to rouse men to active exercise of their higher faculties and thus to withdraw them from the idolatrous service of assumptions indolently taken upon trust, and engage them in the worship and service of the God who is truth.

I

BOOK I.
CHAP. III.
their
Faculties.

BOOK I. as certain as anything can be, and I think more evident than
 CHAP. III. many of those propositions that go for principles; and yet there are millions, however expert in other things, who know not this at all, because they never set their thoughts on work about such angles. And he that certainly knows this proposition may yet be utterly ignorant of the truth of other propositions, in mathematics itself, which are as clear and evident as this; because, in his search of those mathematical truths, he stopped his thoughts short and went not so far. The same may happen concerning the notions we have of the being of a Deity. For, though there be no truth which a man may more evidently make out to himself than the existence of a God, yet he that shall content himself with things as he finds them in this world, as they minister to his pleasures and passions, and not make inquiry a little further into their causes, ends, and admirable contrivances, and pursue the thoughts thereof with diligence and attention, may live long without any notion of such a Being. And if any person hath by talk put such a notion into his head, he may perhaps believe it; but if he hath never examined it, his knowledge of it will be no perfecter than his, who having been told, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones, takes it upon trust, without examining the demonstration; and may yield his assent as a probable opinion, but hath no knowledge of the truth of it; which yet his faculties, if carefully employed, were able to make clear and evident to him. But this only, by the by, to show how much *our knowledge depends upon the right use of those powers nature hath bestowed upon us*, and how little upon *such innate principles as are in vain supposed to be in all mankind for their direction*; which all men could not but know if they were there, or else they would be there to no purpose. [¹ And which since all men do not know, nor can distinguish from other adventitious truths, we may well conclude there are no such.]

Men must think and

24. What censure doubting thus of innate principles may

¹ Added in second edition. Strictly interpreted, the words would imply that the philosophical analysis of the constitution of knowledge, in quest of

the principles which afford the ultimate explanation of individual facts, is doomed to failure.

deserve from men, who will be apt to call it pulling up the old foundations of knowledge and certainty¹, I cannot tell;— I persuade myself at least that the way I have pursued, being conformable to truth, lays those foundations surer. This I am certain, I have not made it my business either to quit or follow any authority in the ensuing Discourse. Truth has been my only aim; and wherever that has appeared to lead, my thoughts have impartially followed, without minding whether the footsteps of any other lay that way or not. Not that I want a due respect to other men's opinions; but, after all, the greatest reverence is due to truth: and I hope it will not be thought arrogance to say, that perhaps we should make greater progress in the discovery of rational and contemplative knowledge, if we sought it in the fountain, *in the consideration of things themselves*; and made use rather of our own thoughts than other men's to find it. For I think we may as rationally hope to see with other men's eyes, as to know by other men's understandings. So much as we ourselves consider and comprehend of truth and reason, so much we possess of real and true knowledge. The floating of other men's opinions in our brains, makes us not one jot the more knowing, though they happen to be true. What in them was science, is in us but opiniatrety²; whilst we give up our assent only to reverend names, and do not, as they did, employ our own reason to understand those truths which gave them reputation. Aristotle was certainly a knowing man, but nobody ever thought him so because he blindly embraced, and confidently vented the opinions of another. And if the taking up of another's principles, without examining them, made not him a philosopher, I suppose it will hardly make anybody else so. In the sciences, every one has so much as he really knows and comprehends. What he believes only, and takes upon trust, are but shreds; which, however well in the whole piece, make no considerable addition to his stock

BOOK I.
 CHAP. III.
 know for themselves.

¹ 'The received maxims of all mankind, which used to be the touchstone by which to try truth, must, it seems, be tried themselves; and in the meantime are to be reckoned purely artificial, and wholly owing to the power-

ful influence of custom and education.' (Lee, *Anti-Scepticism*.)

² 'Opinionatrety,' i. e. obstinate adherence to opinion. Occasionally used by Locke; also Brown, *Vulgar Errors*, Bk. VII. ch. ix.

BOOK I. who gathers them. Such borrowed wealth, like fairy money,
 CHAP. III. though it were gold in the hand from which he received it,
 will be but leaves and dust when it comes to use.

25. When men have found some general propositions that
 Whence the Opinion of Innate Principles. could not be doubted of as soon as understood, it was, I know,
 a short and easy way to conclude them innate¹. This being
 once received, it eased the lazy from the pains of search, and
 stopped the inquiry of the doubtful concerning all that was
 once styled innate². And it was of no small advantage
 to those who affected to be masters and teachers, to make
 this the principle of principles,—that principles must not be
questioned. For, having once established this tenet,—that
 there are innate principles, it put their followers upon a
 necessity of receiving *some* doctrines as such; which was to
 take them off from the use of their own reason and judgment,
 and put them on believing and taking them upon trust
 without further examination: in which posture of blind
 credulity, they might be more easily governed by, and made
 useful to some sort of men, who had the skill and office to
 principle and guide them³. Nor is it a small power it gives
 one man over another, to have the authority to be the dictator
 of principles, and teacher of unquestionable truths; and to
 make a man swallow that for an innate principle which may
 serve to his purpose who teacheth them⁴. Whereas had they

¹ Self-evident principles, he means to say, were falsely assumed to be 'innate,' or seen to be necessarily true *from birth by all men*. He deprecates this uncritical assumption of them, because it encourages laziness, and opens the door to innumerable prejudices, under the specious name of 'innate principles.' He protests against the indolence which thus blindly reposes on the opinions of the community, and which grudges the private judgment by which each man is detached from the community and becomes *himself*. This development of the individual, in isolation from the race, Locke exaggerates, making it an end in itself, instead of a means to the higher end of an improved or more

developed Common Reason. Cf. *Conduct of Understanding*, § 41.

² Hence Locke's hostility to them.

³ 'Si le dessein de l'auteur est de conseiller qu'on *cherche les preuves des vérités* qui en peuvent recevoir sans distinguer si elles sont innées ou non, nous sommes entièrement d'accord; et l'opinion des vérités innées, de la manière que je les prends, n'en doit détourner personne.' (Leibniz, *Nouv. Essais*.)

⁴ This is another expression of the moral purpose of Locke's warfare with innateness of knowledge,—understood by him as knowledge got without personal exertion, and without the contact and suggestions of experience.

examined the ways whereby men came to the knowledge BOOK I.
 of many universal truths, they would have found them to CHAP. III.
 result in the minds of men from the being of things themselves, when duly considered¹; and that they were discovered by the application of those faculties that were fitted by nature to receive and judge of them, when duly employed about them.

26. To show *how* the understanding proceeds herein is Con-
 the design of the following Discourse; which I shall proceed clusion.
 to when I have first premised, that hitherto,—to clear my
 way² to those foundations which I conceive are the only
 true ones, whereon to establish those notions we can have of
 our own knowledge,—it hath been necessary for me to give an
 account of the reasons I had to doubt of innate principles³.

¹ Not abstract reasonings about Being considered *a priori*,—which is to begin at the wrong end, and to 'lose ourselves in the vast ocean' of abstract ontology; but beginning at the other end, *a posteriori*, among the phenomena presented in perception, sensuous and spiritual, in which concrete beings are manifested in part, and may be gradually interpreted, to the extent that is necessary for us, as men sensuous and spiritual—this is the intellectual ideal of the *Essay*.

² The First Book is not part of Locke's positive explanation of Human Understanding. It does not appear in the abstract of the *Essay* published by Le Clerc. In this section he projects a transition from the deductive argument with which he opens, to 'experience and observation,' and an inductive interpretation of phenomena. But inductive interpretation involves unconscious presuppositions as well as deductive argument; and philosophy is the reflective organisation of the presuppositions of both, which are implied in all the phenomena of nature and spirit.

³ 'In the First Book the author is very elaborate in the proof that there are no innate ideas, and consequently

propositions, which are compounded of ideas—in order to remove the rubbish which encumbered the foundation on which he intended to erect his new scheme of knowledge. All which, I think, might have been saved, in the strict sense which he puts upon the word *innate*; for therein surely he has no adversary. For no one does, or at least can reasonably assert, that the minds of embryos, in the first moment after their creation or union to their organised bodies, are ready furnished with [conscious] ideas, or have any propositions or principles [consciously] implanted in them or stamped upon them; that is an idle supposition. Such expressions are to be understood figuratively, to signify that the ideas *owe their origin to the constitution of human nature, as it stands necessarily related to other parts of the universe*.' (Lee, *Anti-Scepticism*, Preface, p. 1.) Locke's determination to purge the human mind of its *idola*—to have a *tabula rasa* from which to start on the march of modern enlightenment—leads him in this First Book to attack what no one worth arguing with would care to defend; while his recognition of self-evident ultimate truth is a concession to the principle of innateness, which,

BOOK I. And since the arguments which are against them do, some of
 CHAP. III. them, rise from common received opinions, I have been forced to take several things for granted; which is hardly avoidable to any one, whose task is to show the falsehood or improbability of any tenet;—it happening in controversial discourses as it does in assaulting of towns; where, if the ground be but firm whereon the batteries are erected, there is no further inquiry of whom it is borrowed, nor whom it belongs to, so it affords but a fit rise for the present purpose. But in the future part of this Discourse, designing to raise an edifice uniform and consistent with itself, as far as my own experience and observation will assist me, I hope to erect it on such a basis that I shall not need to shore it up with props and buttresses, leaning on borrowed or begged foundations: or at least, if mine prove a castle in the air, I will endeavour it shall be all of a piece and hang together. Wherein I warn the reader not to expect undeniable cogent demonstrations, unless I may be allowed the privilege, not seldom assumed by others, to take my principles for granted¹; and then, I doubt not, but I can demonstrate too. All that I shall say for the principles I proceed on is, that I can only appeal to men's own unprejudiced experience and observation² whether they be true or not; and this is enough for a man who professes no more than to lay down candidly and freely his own conjectures, concerning a subject lying somewhat in the dark, without any other design than an unbiassed inquiry after truth.

if he had carried it out, might have brought him into harmony with its philosophical advocates.

¹ As little in the remaining, as in the preceding part of this Discourse, can he advance without presuppositions. The trustworthiness and supremacy of active Reason in the universe, and necessary implicates of Reason, are consciously or unconsciously assumed. Only complete sceptics surrender all principles, and then they become incapable of making any propositions.

² Yet Cousin regards the whole *Essay* as a gratuitous hypothesis, in which the facts presented by the human understanding are made to conform to a foregone theory or conclusion. According to Green and others, it is a mass of incoherent and mutually contradictory propositions; but Locke in this paragraph designs that, even if 'a castle in the air,' it should at least be 'an edifice uniform and consistent with itself,' 'all of a piece,' and that 'hangs together.'

BOOK II

OF IDEAS