

Excerpts from the Life and Letters of John Locke

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Table of Contents

Knowledge, Its Extent and Measure	3
Study	7
Supplement 1	12
Supplement 2	17
"Scrupulosity, * 1678	21
Judging Election Resolution.....	26
Of Ethics in General	28
1677.-Species.....	35
Relation Space. 1678	40

Knowledge, Its Extent and Measure

Quod volumus facile credimus.

Feb. 8, 1677. Question. How far, and by what means, the will works upon the understanding and assent?

Our minds are not made as large as truth, nor suited to the whole extent of things; amongst those that come within its reach, it meets with a great many too big for its grasp, and there are not a few that it is fair to give up as incomprehensible. It finds itself lost in the vast extent of space,

and the least particle of matter puzzles it with an inconceivable divisibility; and those who, out of a great care not to admit unintelligible things, deny or question an eternal omniscient spirit, run themselves into a greater difficulty by making an eternal and intelligent matter. Nay, our minds, whilst they think and (***) our bodies, find it past their capacity to conceive how they do the one or the other.

This state of our minds, however remote from the perfection whereof we ourselves have an idea, ought not, however, to discourage our endeavours in the search of truth, or make us think we are incapable of knowing anything, because we cannot understand all things. We shall find that we are sent out into the world furnished with those faculties that are fit to obtain knowledge, and knowledge sufficient, if we will but confine it within those purposes, and direct it to those ends, which the constitution of our nature, and the circumstance of our being, point out to us.

If we consider ourselves in the condition we are in the world, we cannot but observe that we are in an estate, the necessities whereof call for a constant supply of meat, drink, clothing, and defence from the weather; and our conveniences demand yet a great deal more.

To provide these things, Nature furnishes us only with the material, for the most part rough, and unfitted to our use; it requires labour, art, and thought, to suit them to our occasions; and if the knowledge of man had not found out ways to shorten the labour, and improve several things which seem not, at first sight, to be of any use to us,

we should spend all our time to make a scanty provision for a poor and miserable life: a sufficient instance whereof we have in the inhabitants of that large and fertile part of the world the West Indies, who lived a poor uncomfortable life, scarce able to subsist; and that, perhaps, only for want of knowing the use of that store out of which the inhabitants of the Old World had the skill to draw iron, and thereof make themselves utensils necessary for the carrying on and improvement of all other arts; no one of which can subsist well, if at all, without that one metal.

Here, then, is a large field for knowledge, proper for the use and advantage of men in this word; viz. to find out new inventions of despatch to shorten or ease our labour, or applying sagaciously together several agents and materials, to procure new and beneficial productions fit for our use, whereby our stock of riches (i. e. things useful for the conveniences of our life) may be increased, or better preserved: and for such discoveries as these the mind of man is well fitted; though, perhaps, the essence of things, their first original, their secret way of working,

and the whole extent of corporeal beings, be as far beyond our capacity as it is beside our use; and we have no reason to complain that we do not know the nature of the sun or stars, that the consideration of light itself leaves us in the dark, and a thousand other speculations in Nature, since, if we knew them, they would be of no solid advantage to us, nor help to make our lives the happier, they being but the useless employment of idle or over-curious brains, which amuse themselves about things out of which they can by no means draw any real benefit.

So that, if we will consider man as in the world, and that his mind and faculties were given him for any use, we must necessarily conclude it must be to procure him the happiness which this world is capable of; which certainly is nothing else but plenty of all sorts of those things which can with most ease, pleasure, and variety, preserve him longest in it: so that, had mankind no concernment but in the world, no apprehensions of any being after this life,

they need trouble their heads with nothing but the history of nature, and an inquiry into the qualities of the things in the mansion of the universe which hath fallen to their lot, and being well-skilled in the knowledge of material causes and effect of things in their power, directing their thoughts as to the improvement of such arts and inventions, engines, and utensils,

as might best contribute to their continuation in it with conveniency and delight, they might well spare themselves the trouble of looking any further: they need not perplex themselves about the original frame or constitution of the universe, drawing the great machine into systems of their own contrivance, and building hypotheses, obscure, perplexed, and of no other use but to raise dispute and continual wrangling: For what need have we to complain of our ignorance in the more general and foreign parts of nature,

when all our business lies at home? Why should we bemoan our want of knowledge in the particular apartments of the universe, when our portion here only lies in the little spot of earth where we and all our concernments are shut up? Why should we think ourselves hardly dealt with, that we are not furnished with compass nor plummet to sail and fathom that restless, unnavigable ocean,

of the universal matter, motion, and space? Since there be shores to bound our voyage and travels, there are at least no commodities to be brought from thence serviceable to our use, nor that will better our condition; and we need not be displeased that we have not knowledge enough to discover whether we have any neighbours or no in those large bulks of matter we see floating in the abyss, or of what kind they are, since we can never have any communication with them that might turn to our advantage.

So that, considering man barely as an animal of three or four score years' duration, and then to end, his condition and state requires no other knowledge than what may furnish him with those things which may help him to pass out to the end of that time with ease, safety, and delight, which is all the happiness he is capable of: and for the attainment of a correspondent measure mankind is sufficiently provided. He has faculties

and organs well adapted for the discovery, if he thinks fit to employ and use them.

Another use of his knowledge is to live in peace with his fellow-men, and this also he is capable of. Besides a plenty of the good things of this world, with life, health, and peace to enjoy them, we can think of no other concernment mankind hath that leads him not out of it, and places him not beyond the confines of this earth; and it seems probable that there should be some better state somewhere else to which man might arise, since, when he hath all that this world can afford, he is still unsatisfied, uneasy, and far from happiness.

It is certain, and that all men must consent to, that there is a possibility of another state when this scene is over; and that the happiness and misery of that depends on the ordering of ourselves in our actions in this time of our probation here. The acknowledgment of a God will easily lead any one to this,

and he hath left so many footsteps of himself, so many proofs of his being in every creature, as are sufficient to convince any who will but make use of their faculties that way, and I dare say nobody escapes this conviction for want of sight; but if any be so blind, it is only because they will not open their eyes and see; and those only doubt of a Supreme Ruler and a universal law, who would willingly be under no law, accountable to no judge; those only question another life hereafter, who intend to lead such a one here as they fear to have examined, and would be loth to answer for when it is over.

This opinion I shall always be of, till I see that those who would cast off all thoughts of God, heaven, and hell, lead such lives as would become rational creatures, or observe that one unquestionable moral rule, Do as you would be done to.

It being then possible, and at least probable, that there is another life, wherein we shall give an account of our past actions in this to the great God of heaven and earth; here comes in another, and that the main concernment of mankind, to know what those actions are that he is to do, what those are he is to avoid, what the law is he is to live by here, and shall be judged by hereafter; and in this part too he is not left so in the dark, but that he is furnished with principles of knowledge, and faculties able to discover light enough to guide him; his understanding seldom fails him in this part, unless where his will would have it so.

If he take a wrong course, it is most commonly because he goes wilfully out of the way, or, at least, chooses to be bewildered; and there are few, if any who dreadfully mistake, that are willing to be in the right; and I think one may safely say, that amidst the great ignorance which is so justly complained of amongst mankind, where any one endeavoured to know his duty sincerely, with a design to do it, scarce ever any one miscarried for want of knowledge.

The business of men being to be happy in this world, by the enjoyment of the things of nature subservient to life, health, ease, and pleasure, and by the comfortable hopes of another life when this is ended; and in the other world, by an accumulation of higher degrees of bliss in an everlasting security, we need no other knowledge for the attainment of those ends but of the history

and observation of the effect and operation of natural bodies within our power, and of our duty in the management of our own actions, as far as they depend on our will, i. e. as far also as they are in our power.

One of those is the proper enjoyment of our bodies, and the highest perfection of that, and the other of our souls; and to attain both of these we are fitted with faculties both of body and soul. Whilst then we have ability to improve our knowledge in experimental natural philosophy, whilst we want not principles whereon to establish moral rules,

nor light (if we please to make use of it) to distinguish good from bad actions, we have no reason to complain if we meet with difficulties in other things which put our reasons to a nonplus, confound our understandings, and leave us perfectly in the dark under the sense of our own weakness: for those relating not to our happiness any way are no part of our business, and therefore it is not to be wondered if we have not abilities given us to deal with things that are not to our purpose, nor conformable to our state or end.

God having made the great machine of the universe suitable to his infinite power and wisdom, why should we think so proudly of ourselves, whom he hath put into a small canton, and perhaps the most inconsiderable part of it, that he hath made us the surveyors of it, and that it is not as it should be unless we can thoroughly comprehend it in all the parts of it? It is agreeable to his goodness, and to our condition, that we should be able to apply them to our use, to understand so far some parts of that we have to do with, as to be able to make them subservient to the convenience of our life, as proper to fill our hearts with praise of his bounty. But it is also agreeable to his greatness,

that it should exceed our capacity, and the highest flight of our imagination, the better to fill us with admiration of his power and wisdom; besides its serving to other ends, and being suited probably to the use of other more intelligent creatures which we know not of. If it be not reasonable to expect that we should be able to penetrate into all the depths of nature, and understand the whole constitution of the universe, it is yet a higher insolence to doubt the existence of a God because we cannot comprehend him to think there is not an infinite Being because we are not so.

If all things must stand or fall by the measure of our understandings, and that denied to be, wherein we find inextricable difficulties, there will very little remain in the world, and we shall scarce leave ourselves so much as understandings, souls, or bodies. It will become us better to consider well our own weakness and exigencies, what we are made for, and what we are capable of,

and to apply the powers of our bodies and faculties of our souls, which are well suited to our condition, in the search of that natural and moral knowledge, which, as it is not beyond our strength, so is not beside our purpose, but may be attained by moderate industry, and improved to our infinite advantage.

Study

1677, March 6th. The end of study is knowledge, and the end of knowledge practice or communication. This true delight is commonly joined with all improvements of knowledge; but when we study only for that end, it is to be considered rather as diversion than business, and so is to be reckoned among our recreations.

The extent of knowledge or things knowable is so vast, our duration here so short, and the entrance by which the knowledge of things gets into our understanding so narrow, that the time of our whole life would be found too short without the necessary allowances for childhood and old age (which are not capable of much improvement), for the refreshment of our bodies and unavoidable avocations, and in most conditions for the ordinary employment of their callings, which if they neglect, they cannot eat nor live.

I say that the whole time of our life, without these necessary defalcations, is not enough to acquaint us with all those things, I will not say which we are capable of knowing, but which it would not be only convenient but very advantageous to know. He that will consider how many doubts and difficulties have remained in the minds of the most knowing men after long and studious inquiry; how much,

in those several provinces of knowledge they have surveyed, they have left undiscovered; how many other provinces of the "mundus intelligibilis," as I may call it, they never once travelled on, will easily consent to the disproportionateness of our time and strength to this greatness of business, of knowledge taken in its full latitude,

and which if it be not our main business here, yet it is so necessary to it, and so interwoven with it, that we can make little further progress in doing than we do in knowing-at least to little purpose; acting without understanding being usually at best but lost labour.

It therefore much behoves us to improve the best we can our time and talent in this respect, and since we have a long journey to go, and the days are but short, to take the straightest and most direct road we can.

To this purpose, it may not perhaps be amiss to decline some things that are likely to bewilder us, or at least lie our of our way.-First, as all that maze of words and phrases which have been invented and employed only to instruct and amuse people in the art of disputing, and will be found perhaps, when looked into, to have little or no meaning; and with this kind of stuff the logics, physics,

ethics, metaphysics, and divinity of the schools are thought by some to be too much filled. This I am sure, that where we leave distinctions without finding a difference in things; where we make variety of phrases, or think we furnish ourselves with arguments without a progress in the real knowledge of things, we only fill our heads with empty sounds, which, however thought to belong to learning and knowledge, will no more improve our understandings and strengthen our reason,

than the noise of a jack will fill our bellies or strengthen our bodies: and the art to fence with those which are called subtleties, is of no more use than it would be to be dexterous in tying and untying knots in cobwebs. Words are of no value nor use, but as they are the signs of things; when they stand

for nothing, they are less than cyphers, for, instead of augmenting the value of those they are joined with, they lessen it, and make it nothing; and where they have not a clear distinct signification, they are like unusual or ill-made figures that confound our meaning.

2nd. An aim and desire to know what hath been other men's opinions. Truth needs no recommendation, and error is not mended by it; and in our inquiry after knowledge, it as little concerns us what other men have thought, as it does one who is to go from Oxford to London, to know what scholars walk quietly on foot, inquiring the way and surveying the country as the went, who rode post after their guide without minding the way he went, who were carried along muffled up in a coach with their company, or where one doctor lost or went out of his way, or where another stuck in the mire. If a traveller gets a knowledge of the right way,

it is no matter whether he knows the infinite windings, by-ways, and turnings where others have been misled; the knowledge of the right secures him from the wrong, and that is his great business: and so methinks it is in our pilgrimage through this world; men's fancies have been infinite even of the learned, and the history of them endless: and some not knowing whither they would go, have kept going, though they have only moved; others have followed only their own imaginations, though they meant right, which is an errant which with the wisest leads us through strange mazes. Interest has blinded some and prejudiced others, who have yet marched confidently on; and however out of the way, they have thought themselves most in the right. I do not say this to undervalue the light we receive from others, or to think there are not those who assist us mightily in our endeavours after knowledge; perhaps without books we should be as ignorant as the Indians, whose minds are as ill clad as their bodies;

but I think it is an idle and useless thing to make it one's business to study what have been other men's sentiments in things where reason is only to be judge, on purpose to be furnished with them, and to be able to cite them on all occasions. However it be esteemed a great part of learning, yet to a man that considers how little time he has, and how much work to do, how many things he is to learn, how many doubts to clear in religion, how many rules to establish to himself in morality, how much pains to be taken with himself to master his unruly desires and passions,

how to provide himself against a thousand cases and accidents that will happen, and an infinite deal more both in his general and particular calling; I say to a man that considers this well, it will not seem much his business to acquaint himself designedly with the various conceits of men that are to be found in books even upon subjects of moment. I deny not but the knowing of these opinions in all their variety, contradiction,

and extravagancy, may serve to instruct us in the vanity and ignorance of mankind, and both to humble and caution us upon that consideration; but this seems not reason enough to me to engage purposely in this study, and in our inquiries after more material points, we shall meet with enough of this medley to acquaint us with the weakness of man's understanding.

3rd. Purity of language, a polished style, or exact criticism in foreign languages-thus I think Greek and Latin may be called, as well as French and

Italian,-and to spend much time in these may perhaps serve to set one off in the world, and give one the reputation of a scholar; but if that be all, methinks it is labouring for an outside; it is at best but a handsome dress of truth or falsehood that one busies on's self about, and makes most of those who lay out their time this way rather as fashionable gentlemen than as wise or useful men.

There are so many advantages of speaking one's own language well, and being a master in it, that let a man's calling be what it will, it cannot but be worth our taking some pains in it, but it is by no means to have the first place in our studies; but he that makes good language subservient to a good life and an instrument of virtue, is doubly enabled to good to others.

When I speak against the laying out our time and study on criticisms, I mean such as may serve to make us great masters in Pindar and Persius, Herodotus and Tacitus; and I must always be understood to except all study of languages and critical learning, that may aid us in understanding the Scriptures; for they being an eternal foundation of truth as immediately coming from the fountain of truth, whatever doth help us to understand their true sense, doth well deserve our pains and study.

4th. antiquity and history, as far as they are designed only to furnish us with story and talk. For the stories of Alexander and C?sar, no further than they instruct us in the art of living well, and furnish us with observations of wisdom and prudence, are not one jot to be preferred to the history of Robin Hood, or the Seven Wise Masters. I do not deny but history is very useful,

and very instructive of human life; but if it be studied only for the reputation of being an historian, it is a very empty thing; and he that can tell all the particulars of Herodotus and Plutarch, Curtius and Livy, without making any other use of them, may be an ignorant man with a good memory, and with all his pains hath only filled his head with Christmas tales. And which is worse, the greatest part of history being made up of wars and conquests, and their style, especially the Romans,

speaking of valour as the chief, if not the only virtue, we are in danger to be misled by the general current and business of history, and, looking on Alexander and C?sar, and such like heroes, as the highest instances of human greatness, because they each of them caused the death of several 100,000 men, and the ruin of a much greater number, overrun a great part of the earth, and killed the inhabitants to possess themselves of their countries- we are apt to make butchery and rapine the chief marks and very essence of human greatness.

And if civil history be a great dealer of it, and to many readers thus useless, curious and difficult inquiries in antiquity are much more so; and the exact dimensions of the Colossus, or figure of the Capitol, the ceremonies of the Greek and Roman marriages, or who it was that first coined money; these, I confess, set a man well off in the world, especially amongst the learned, but set him very little on in his way.

5th. Nice questions and remote useless speculations, as where the earthly Paradise was-or what fruit it was that was forbidden-where Lazarus's soul was whilst his body lay dead-and what kind of bodies we shall have at the Resurrection? &c. &c. These things well regulated, will cut off at once a

great deal of business from one who is setting out into a course of study; not that all these are to be counted utterly useless, and lost time cast away on them.

The four last may be each of them the full and laudable employment of several persons who may with great advantage make languages, history, or antiquity, their study.

For as for words without meaning, which is the first head I mentioned, I can not imagine them any way worth hearing or reading, much less studying; but there is such a harmony in all sorts of truth and knowledge, they do all support and give light so to one another, that one cannot deny but languages and criticisms, history and antiquity, strange opinions and odd speculations, serve often to clear and confirm very material and useful doctrines. My meaning therefore is, not that they are not to be looked into by a studious man at any time; all that I contend is,

that they are not to be made our chief aim, nor first business, and that they are always to be handled with some caution: for since having but a little time, we have need of much care in the husbanding of it. These parts of knowledge ought not to have either the first or greatest part of our studies, and we have the more need of this caution, because they are much in vogue amongst men of letters, and carry with them a great exterior of learning, and so are a glittering temptation in a studious man's way, and such as is very likely to mislead him.

But if it were fit for me to marshal the parts of knowledge, and allot to any one its place and precedency thereby to direct one's studies, I should think it were natural to set them in this order.

1. Heaven being our great business and interest, the knowledge which may direct us thither is certainly so too, so that this is without peradventure the study that ought to take the first and chiefest place in our thoughts; but wherein it consists, its parts, method, and application, will deserve a chapter by itself.

2. The next thing to happiness in the other world, is a quiet prosperous passage through this, which requires a discreet conduct and management of ourselves in the several occurrences of our lives. The study of prudence then seems to me to deserve the second place in our thoughts and studies. A man may be, perhaps, a good man (which lives in truth and sincerity of heart towards God), with a small portion of prudence, but he will never be very happy in himself, no useful to others without; these two are every man's business.

3. If those who are left by their predecessors with a plentiful fortune are excused from having a particular calling, in order to their subsistence in this life, it is yet certain that, by the law of God, they are under an obligation of doing something; which, having been judiciously treated by an able pen, I shall not meddle with, but pass to those who have made letters their business; and in these I think it is incumbent to make the proper business of their calling the third place in their study.

This order being laid, it will be easy for every one to determine with himself what tongues and histories are to be studied by him, and how far in subserviency to his general or particular calling.

Our happiness being thus parcelled out, and being in every part of it very large, it is certain we should set ourselves on work without ceasing, did not both the parts we are made up of bid us hold. Our bodies and our minds are neither of them capable of continual study, and if we take not a just measure of our strength in endeavouring to do a great deal, we shall do nothing at all.

Supplement 1

The knowledge we acquire in this world I am apt to think extends not beyond the limits of this life. The beatific vision of the other life needs not the help of this dim twilight; but be that as it will, I am sure the principal end why we are to get knowledge here, is to make use of it for the benefit of ourselves and others in this world;

but if by gaining it we destroy our health, we labour for a thing that will be useless in our hands; and if by harassing our bodies (though with a design to render ourselves more useful) we deprive ourselves of the abilities and opportunities of doing that good we might have done with a meaner talent, which God thought sufficient for us by having denied us the strength to improve it to that pitch which men of stronger constitutions can attain to, we rob God of so much service, and our neighbour of all that help which, in a state of health, with moderate knowledge, we might have been able to perform. He that sinks his vessel by overloading it, though it be with gold and silver and precious stones, will give his owner but an ill account of his voyage.

It being past doubt, then, that allowance is to be made for the temper and strength of our bodies, and that our health is to regulate the measure of our studies, the great secret is to find out the proportion; the difficulty whereof lies in this, that it must not only be varied according to the constitution and strength of every individual man, but it must also change with the temper, vigour, and circumstances, and health of every particular man, in the different varieties of health, or indisposition of body, which everything our bodies have any commerce with is able to alter: so that it is as hard to say how many hours a day a man shall study constantly, as to say how much meat he shall eat every day, wherein his own prudence, governed by the present circumstances, can only judge. . . The regular proceeding of our watch not being the fit measure of time, but the secret motions of a much more curious engine, our bodies being to limit out the portion of time in this occasion: however,

it may be so contrived that all the time may not be lost, for the conversation of an ingenious friend upon what one hath read in the morning, or any other profitable subject, may perhaps let into the mind as much improvement of knowledge, though with less prejudice to the health, as settled solemn poring over books, which we generally call study; which, though a necessary part, yet I am sure is not the only, and perhaps not the best, way of improving the understanding.

2. Great care is to be taken that our studies encroach not upon our sleep: this I am sure, sleep is the great balsam of life and restorative of nature, and studious sedentary men have more need of it than the active and laborious, because those men's business and their bodily labours, though they waste their spirits, help transpiration, and carry away their excrements, which are the foundation of diseases; whereas the studious sedentary man, employing his spirits within, equally or more wastes them than the other, but without the benefit of transpiration, allowing the matter of disease insensibly to accumulate. We are to lay by our books and meditations when we find either

our heads or stomachs indisposed upon any occasion; study at such time doing great harm to the body, and very little good to the mind.

1st. As the body, so the mind also, gives laws to our studies; I mean, to the duration and continuance of them; let it be never so capacious, never so active, it is not capable of constant labour nor total rest. The labour of the mind is study, or intention of thought, and when we find it is weary, either in pursuing other men's thoughts, as in reading, or tumbling or tossing its own, as in meditation, it is time to give off and let it recover itself.

Sometimes meditation gives a refreshment to the weariness of reading, and vice versâ; sometimes the change of ground, i. e. going from one subject or science to another, rouses the mind, and fills it with fresh vigour; oftentimes discourse enlivens it when it flags, and puts an end to the weariness without stopping it one jot, but rather forwarding it in its journey; and sometimes it is so tired, that nothing but a perfect relaxation will serve the turn. All these are to be made use of according as every one finds most successful in himself to the best husbandry of his time and thought.

2nd. The mind has sympathies and antipathies as well as the body; it has a natural preference often of one study before another. It would be well if one had a perfect command of them, and sometimes one is to try for the mastery, to bring the mind into order and a pliant obedience; but generally it is better to follow the bent and tendency of the mind itself, so long as it keeps within the bounds of our proper business, wherein there is generally latitude enough. By this means, we shall go not only a great deal faster, and hold out a great deal longer,

but the discovery we shall make will be a great deal clearer, and make deeper impressions in our minds. The inclination of the mind is as the palate to the stomach; that seldom digests well in the stomach, or adds much strength to the body, that nauseates the palate, and is not recommended by it.

There is a kind of restiveness in almost every one's mind; sometimes, without perceiving the cause, it will boggle and stand still, and one cannot get it a step forward; and at another time it will press forward, and there is no holding it in. It is always good to take it when it is willing, and keep on whilst it goes at ease, though it be to the breach of some of the other rules concerning the body.

But one must take care of trespassing on that side too often, for one that takes pleasure in study, flatters himself that a little now, and a little tomorrow, does no harm, that he feels no ill effects of an hour's sitting up,-insensibly undermines his health, and, when the disease breaks out, it is seldom charged to these past miscarriages that laid in the provision for it.

The subject being chosen, the body and mind being both in a temper fit for study, what remains but that a man betake himself to it? These certainly are good preparatories, yet if there be not something else done, perhaps we shall not make all the profit we might.

1st. It is a duty we owe to God, as the fountain and author of all truth, who is truth itself; and it is a duty also we owe our own selves, if we will deal candidly and sincerely with our own souls; to have our minds constantly disposed to entertain and receive truth wheresoever we meet with

it, or under whatsoever appearance of plain or ordinary, strange, new, or perhaps displeasing, it may come in our way. Truth is the proper object, the proper riches and furniture of the mind, and according as his stock of this is, so is the difference and value of one man above another. He that fills his head with vain notions and false opinions, may have his mind perhaps puffed up and seemingly much enlarged, but in truth it is narrow and empty; for all that it comprehends, all that it contains, amounts to nothing, or less than nothing; for falsehood is below ignorance, and a lie worse than nothing.

Our first and great duty then is, to bring to our studies and to our inquiries after knowledge a mind covetous of truth; that seeks after nothing else, and after that impartially, and embraces it, how poor, how contemptible, how unfashionable soever it may seem.

This is that which all studious men profess to do, and yet it is that where I think very many miscarry. Who is there almost that has not opinions planted in him by education time out of mind; which by that means come to be as the municipal laws of the country, which must not be questioned, but are then looked on with reverence as the standards of right and wrong, truth and falsehood; when perhaps these so sacred opinions were but the oracles of the nursery, or the traditional grave talk of those who pretend to inform our childhood; who receive them from hand to hand without ever examining them?

This is the fate of our tender age, which being thus seasoned early, it grows by continuation of time, as it were, into the very constitution of the mind, which afterwards very difficultly receives a different tincture. When we are grown up, we find the world divided into bands and companies; not only as congregated under several polities and governments, but united only upon account of opinions, and in that respect combined strictly one with another, and distinguished from others, especially in matters of religion. If birth or chance have not thrown a man young into any of these, which yet seldom fails to happen, choice, when he is grown up, certainly puts him into some or other of them; often out of an opinion that that party is in the right, and sometimes because he finds it is not safe to stand alone, and therefore thinks it convenient to herd somewhere.

Now, in every one of these parties of men there are a certain number of opinions which are received and owned as the doctrines and tenets of that society, with the profession and practice whereof all who are of their communion ought to give up themselves, or else they will be scarce looked on as of that society, or at best be thought but lukewarm brothers, or in danger to apostatize.

It is plain, in the great difference and contrariety of opinions that are amongst these several parties, that there is much falsehood and abundance of mistakes in most of them. Cunning in some, and ignorance in others, first made them keep them up; and yet how seldom is it that implicit faith, fear of losing credit with the party or interest (for all these operate in their turns), suffers any one to question the tenet of his party; but altogether in a bundle he receives, embraces, and, without examining, he professes and sticks to them, and measures all other opinions by them. Worldly interest also

insinuates into several men's minds divers opinions, which, suiting with their temporal advantage, are kindly received, and in time so riveted there, that it is not easy to remove them.

By these, and perhaps other means, opinions come to be settled and fixed in men's minds, which, whether true or false, there they remain in reputation as substantial material truths, and so are seldom questioned or examined by those who entertain them: and if they happen to be false, as in most men the greatest part must necessarily be, they put a man quite out of the way in the whole course of his studies; and though in his reading and inquiries he flatters himself that his design is to inform his understanding in the real knowledge of truth,

yet in effect it tends and reaches to nothing but the confirming of his already received opinions, the things he meets with in other men's writings and discoveries being received or neglected as they hold proportion with those anticipations which before had taken possession of his mind.

This will plainly appear if we look but on an instance or two of it. It is a principal doctrine of the Roman party to believe that their Church is infallible; this is received as the mark of a good Catholic, and implicit faith, or fear, or interest, keeps all men from questioning it. This being entertained as an undoubted principle, see what work it makes with Scripture and reason; neither of them will be heard-the speaking with never so much clearness and demonstration-when they contradict any of the doctrines or institutions; and though it is not grown to that height,

barefaced to deny the Scripture, yet interpretations and distinctions, evidently contrary to the plain sense and to the common apprehensions of men, are made use of to elude its meaning, and preserve entire the authority of this their principle, that the Church is infallible.

On the other side, make the light within our guide, and see what will become of reason and Scripture. An Hobbist, with his principle of self-preservation, whereof himself is to be judge, will not easily admit a great many plain duties of morality. The same must necessarily be found in all men who have taken up principles without examining the truth of them. It being here, then, that men take up prejudice to truth without being aware of it, and afterwards, like men of corrupted appetites, when they think to nourish themselves, generally feed only on those things that suit with and increase the vicious humour,-this part is carefully to be looked after. These ancient preoccupations of our minds, these several and almost sacred opinions, are to be examined, if we will make way for truth, and put our minds in that freedom which belongs and is necessary to them.

A mistake is not the less so, and will never grow into a truth, because we have believed it a long time, though perhaps it be the harder to part with; and an error is not the less dangerous, nor the less contrary to truth, because it is cried up and had in veneration by any party, though it is likely we shall be the less disposed to think it so.

Here, therefore, we have need of all our force and all our sincerity; and here it is we have use of the assistance of a serious and sober friend, who may help us sedately to examine these our received and beloved opinions;

for the mind by itself being prepossessed with them cannot so easily question, look round, and argue against them.

They are the darlings of our minds, and it is as hard to find fault with them, as for a man in love to dislike his mistress: there is need, therefore, of the assistance of another, at least it is very useful impartially to show us their defects, and help us to try them by the plain and evident principle of reason or religion.

Supplement 2

2. This grand miscarriage in our study draws after it another of less consequence, which yet is very natural for bookish men to run into, and that is the reading of authors very intently and diligently to mind the arguments pro and con they use, and endeavour to lodge them safe in their memory, to serve them upon occasion. This, when it succeeds to the purpose designed (which it only does in very good memories, and indeed, is rather the business of the memory than judgment), sets a man off before the world as a very knowing learned man, but upon trial will not be found to be so; indeed it may make a man a ready talker and disputant, but not an able man. It teaches a man to be a fencer; but in the irreconcilable war between truth and falsehood, it seldom or never enables him to choose the right side, or to defend it well, being got of it.

He that desires to be knowing indeed, that covets rather the possession of truth than the show of learning, that designs to improve himself in the solid substantial knowledge of things, ought, I think, to take another course; i. e. to endeavour to get a clear and true notion of things as they are in themselves.

This, being fixed in the mind well (without trusting to or troubling the memory, which often fails us), always naturally suggests arguments upon all occasions, either to defend the truth or confound error. This seems to me to be that which makes some men's discourses to be so clear, evident, and demonstrative, even in a few words; for it is but laying before us the true nature of anything we would discourse of,

and our faculty of reasoning is so natural to us that the clear inferences do, as it were, make themselves: we have, as it were, an instinctive knowledge of the truth, which is always most acceptable to the mind, and the mind embraces it in native and naked beauty. This way also of knowledge, as it is in less danger to be lost,

because it burdens not the memory, but is placed in the judgment; so it makes a man talk always coherently and confidently to himself on which side soever he is attacked, or with whatever arguments: the same truth, by its natural light and contrariety to falsehood, still shows, without much ado, or any great and long deduction of words,

the weakness and absurdity of the opposition: whereas the topical man, with his great stock of borrowed and collected arguments, will be found often to contradict himself; for the arguments of divers men being often founded upon different notions, and deduced from contrary principles, though they may be all directed to the support or confutation of some one opinion, do, notwithstanding, often really clash one with another.

3. Another thing, which is of great use for the clear conception of truth is, if we can bring ourselves to it, to think upon things abstracted and separate from words. Words, without doubt are the great and almost only way of conveyance of one man's thoughts to another man's understanding; but when a man thinks, reasons, and discourses within himself, I see not what need he has of them.

I am sure it is better to lay them aside, and have an immediate converse with the ideas of the things; for words are, in their own nature, so doubtful

and obscure, their signification for the most part so uncertain and undetermined, which men even designedly have in their use of them increased, that if, in our meditations, our thoughts busy themselves about words, and stick at the names of things, it is odds but they are misled or confounded. This, perhaps, at first sight may seem but a useless nicety, and in the practice, perhaps,

it will be found more difficult than one would imagine; but yet upon trial I dare say any one's experience will tell him it was worth while to endeavour it. He that would call to mind his absent friend, or preserve his memory, does it best and most effectually by reviving in his mind the idea of him, and contemplating that; and it is but a very faint imperfect way of thinking of one's friend barely to remember his name, and think upon the sound he is usually called by.

4. It is of great use in the pursuit of knowledge not to be too confident nor too distrustful of our own judgment, nor to believe we can comprehend all things nor nothing. He that distrusts his own judgment in everything, and thinks his understanding not to be relied on in the search of truth, cuts off his own legs that he may be carried up and down by others, and makes himself a ridiculous dependant upon the knowledge of others, which can possibly be of no use to him;

for I can no more know anything by another man's understanding than I can see by another man's eyes. So much I know, so much truth I have got; so far I am in the right, as I do really know myself; whatever other men have, it is in their possession, it belongs not to me, nor can be communicated to me but by making me alike knowing; it is a treasure that cannot be lent or made over. On the other side, he that thinks his understanding capable of all things, mounts upon wings of his own fancy, though indeed Nature never meant him any, and so, venturing into the vast expanse of incomprehensible verities, only makes good the fable of Icarus, and loses himself in the abyss. We are here in the state of mediocrity; finite creatures, furnished with powers and faculties very well fitted to some purposes, but very disproportionate to the vast and unlimited extent of things.

5. It would, therefore, be of great service to us to know how far our faculties can reach, that so we might not go about to fathom where our line is too short; to know what things are the proper objects of our inquiries and understanding, and where it is we ought to stop, and launch out no further for fear of losing ourselves or our labour. This perhaps, is an inquiry of as much difficulty as any we shall find in our way of knowledge, and fit to be resolved by a man when he is come to the end of his study, and not to be proposed to one at his setting out;

it being properly the result to be expected after a long and diligent research to determine what is knowable and what not, and not a question to be resolved by the guesses of one who has scarce yet acquainted himself with obvious truths. I shall therefore, at present suspend the thoughts I have had upon this subject, which ought maturely to be considered of, always remembering that things infinite are too large for our capacity; we can have

no comprehensive knowledge of them, and our thoughts are at a loss and confounded when they pry too curiously into them.

The essences also of substantial beings are beyond our ken; the manner also how Nature, in this great machine of the world, produces the several phenomena, and continues the species of things in a successive generation, &c., is what I think lies also out of the reach of our understanding. That which seems to me to be suited to the end of man, and lie level to his understanding, is the improvement of natural experiments for the conveniences of this life, and the way of ordering himself so as to attain happiness in the other-i. e. moral philosophy, which, in my sense, comprehends religion too, or a man's whole duty. [But vid. this alibi.]

6th. For the shortening of our pains, and keeping us from incurable doubt and perplexity of mind, and an endless inquiry after greater certainty than is to be had, it would be very convenient in the several points that are to be known and studied, to consider what proofs the matter in hand is capable of, and not to expect other kind of evidence than the nature of the thing will bear. Where it hath all the proofs that such a matter is capable of, there we ought to acquiesce,

and receive it as an established and demonstrated truth; for that which hath all the evidence it can have, all that belongs to it, in the common state and order of things, and that supposing it to be as true as anything ever was, yet you cannot possibly contrive nor imagine how to have better proofs of it than you have without a miracle: whatsoever is so, though there may be some doubts, some obscurity, yet is clear enough to determine our thoughts and fix our assent. The want of this caution, I fear, has been the cause why some men have turned sceptics in points of great importance, which yet have all the proofs that, considering the nature and circumstances of the thing, any rational man can demand, or the most cautious fancy.

7th. A great help to the memory, and means to avoid confusion in our thoughts, is to draw out and have frequently before us a scheme of those sciences we employ our studies in, a map, as it were, of the mundus intelligibilis. This, perhaps, will be best done by every one himself for his own use, as best agreeable to his own notion, though the nearer it comes to the nature and order of things it is still the better. However, it cannot be decent for me to think my crude draught fit to regulate another's thoughts by, especially when, perhaps, our studies lie different ways; though I cannot but confess to have received this benefit by it,

that though I have changed often the subject I have been studying, read books by patches and accidentally, as they have come in my way, and observed no method nor order in my studies, yet making now and then some little reflection upon the order of things as they are, or at least I have fancied them to have in themselves, I have avoided confusion in my thoughts: the scheme I had made serving like a regular chest of drawers, to lodge those things orderly, and in the proper places, which came to hand confusedly, and without any method at all.

8th. It will be no hinderance at all to our study if we sometimes study ourselves, i. e. our own abilities and defects. There are peculiar endowments and natural fitnesses, as well as defects and weaknesses, almost in every

man's mind: when we have considered and made ourselves acquainted with them, we shall not only be the better enabled to find out remedies for the infirmities, but we shall know the better how to turn ourselves to those things which we are best fitted to deal with, and so to apply ourselves in the course of our studies, as we may be able to make the greatest advantage. He that has a bittle and wedges put into his hand, may easily conclude he is ordered to cleave knotty pieces, and a plane and carving tools to design handsome figures.

It is too obvious a thing to mention the reading only the best authors on those subjects we would inform ourselves in. The reading of bad books is not only the loss of time and standing still, but going backwards quite out of one's way; and he that has his head filled with wrong notions is much more at a distance from truth than he that is perfectly ignorant.

I will only say this one thing concerning books, that however it has got the name, yet converse with books is not, in my opinion, the principal part of study; there are two others that ought to be joined with it, each whereof contributes their share to our improvement in knowledge: and those are, meditation and discourse. Reading, methinks, is but collecting the rough materials, amongst which a great deal must be laid aside as useless.

Meditation is, as it were, choosing and fitting the materials, framing the timbers, squaring and laying the stones, and raising the building; and discourse with a friend (for wrangling in a dispute is of little use) is, as it were, surveying the structure, walking in the rooms, and observing the symmetry and agreement of the parts, taking notice of the solidity or defects of the works, and the best way to find out and correct what is amiss; besides that it helps often to discover truths, and fix them in our minds, as much as either of the other two.

It is time to make an end of this long and overgrown discourse. I shall only add one word, and then conclude; and that is, that whereas in the beginning I cut off history from our study, as a useless part, as certainly it is, where it is read only as a tale that is told; here, on the other side, I recommend it to one who hath well settled in his mind the principles of morality, and knows how to make a judgment on the actions of men, as one of the most useful studies he can apply himself to. There he shall see a picture of the world and the nature of mankind, and so learn to think of men as they are.

There he shall see the rise of opinions, and find from what slight, and sometimes shameful occasions, some of them have taken their rise, which yet afterwards have had great authority, and passed almost for sacred in the world, and borne down all before them. There also one may learn great and useful instructions of prudence, and be warned against the cheats and rogueries of the world, with many more advantages, which I shall not here enumerate.

"Scrupulosity, * 1678

* Probably a draft of a letter to Mr Herbert, afterwards Earl of Pembroke, to whom Locke dedicated the Essay.

"Shall I not pass with you for a great empiric if I offer but one remedy to the three maladies you complain of? Of at least will you not think me to use less care and application than becomes the name of friend you honour me with, if I think to make one answer serve the three papers you have sent me in matters very different? But yet if it be found, as I imagine it will, that they all depend on the same causes, I believe you will think they will not need different cures.

"I conceive, then, that the great difficulty, uncertainty, and perplexity of thought you complain of in these particulars, arise in great measure from this ground, that you think that a man is obliged strictly and precisely at all times to do that which is absolutely best; and that there is always some action so incumbent upon a man, so necessary to be done, preferable to all others, that if that be omitted, one certainly fails in one's duty, and all other actions whatsoever, otherwise good in themselves, yet coming in the place of some more important and better that at the time might be done, are tainted with guilt, and can be no more an acceptable offering to God than a blemished victim under the law.

"I confess sometimes our duty is so evident, and the rule and circumstance so determine it to the present performance, that there is no latitude left; nothing ought at that time to come in the room of it. But this I think happens seldom, at least I may confidently say it does not in the greatest part of the actions of our lives, wherein I think God, out of his infinite goodness, considering our ignorance and frailty,

hath left us a great liberty. Love to God and charity to ourselves and neighbours are, no doubt, at all times indispensably necessary: but whilst we keep these warm in our hearts, and sincerely practise what they upon all occasions suggest to us, I cannot but think that God allows us in the ordinary actions of our lives a great latitude; so that two or more things being proposed to be done, neither of which crosses that fundamental law, but may very well consist with the sincerity wherewith we love God and our neighbour, I think it is at our choice to do either of them.

"The reasons that make me of this opinion are: 1st. That I cannot imagine that God, who has compassion upon our weakness and knows how we are made, would put poor men, nay, the best of men, those that seek him with sincerity and truth, under almost an absolute necessity of sinning perpetually against him, which will almost inevitably follow if there be no latitude at all allowed us in the occurrences of our lives, but that every instant of our being in the world has always incumbent on it one certain action exclusive of all others.

For according to this supposition,

the best being always to be done, and that being but one, it is almost impossible to know which is that one best, there being so many actions which may all have some peculiar and considerable goodness, which we are at the same time capable of doing, and so many nice circumstances and considerations to be weighed one against another, before we can come to

make any judgment which is best, and after all are in great danger to be mistaken: the comparison of those actions that stand in competition together, with all their grounds, motives, and consequences as they lie before us, being very hard to be made;

and what makes the difficulty yet far greater is, that a great many of those which are of moment, and should come into the reckoning, always escape us; our short sight never penetrating far enough into any action to discover all that is comparatively good or bad in it, or the extent of our thoughts to reach all the actions which at any one time we are capable of doing; so that at last, when we come to choose which is best, in making our judgment upon wrong and scanty measures,

we cannot secure ourselves from being in the wrong: this is so evident in all the consultations of mankind, that should you select any number of the best and wisest men you could think of, to deliberate in almost any case what were best to be done, you should find them make almost all different propositions, wherein one (if one) only lighting on what is best, all the rest acting by the best of their skill and caution would have been sinners as missing of that one best. The Apostles themselves were not always of one mind.

"2nd. I cannot conceive it to be the design of God, nor to consist with either his goodness or our business in the world, to clog the actions of our lives, even the minutest of them (which will follow, if one thing that is best is always to be done), with infinite consideration before we begin it, and unavoidable perplexity and doubt when it is done.

When I sat down to write to you this hasty account, before I set pen to paper, I might have considered whether it were best for me ever to meddle with the answering your questions; my want of ability, it being beside my business, the difficulty of advising anybody, and presumption of advising one so far above me, would suggest doubts enough in the case. I might have debated with myself, whether it were best to take time to answer your demands, or, as I do, set to it presently.

"3d. Whether there were not somewhat better that I could do at this time.

"4th. I might doubt whether it were best to read any books on this subject before I gave you my opinion, or send you my own naked thoughts. To those a thousand other scruples, as considerable, might be added, which would still beget others, in every one of which there would be, no doubt, still a better and a worse; which, if I should sit down and with serious consideration endeavour to find and determine clearly and precisely with myself to the minutest difference,

before I betake myself to give you an answer, perhaps my whole age might be spent in the deliberation about writing two sides of paper to you, and I should perpetually blot out one word and put in another, erase tomorrow what I write to-day; whereas, having this single consideration of complying with the desire of a friend whom I honour, and whose desires I think ought to have weight with me, who persuades me that I have an opportunity of giving him some pleasure in it, I cannot think I ought to be scrupulous in the point, or neglect obeying your commands, though I cannot be sure but that I might do better not to offer you my opinion, which may be

instable; and probably I should do better to employ my thoughts how to be able to cure you of a quartan ague,

or to cure in myself some other and more dangerous faults, which is more properly my business. But my intention being respect and service to you, and all the design of my writing consisting with the love I owe to God and my neighbour, I should be very well satisfied with what I write, could I be as well assured it would be useful as I am past doubt it is lawful, and that I have the liberty to do it; and yet I cannot say, and I believe you will not think, it is the best thing I could do. If we were never to do but what is absolutely the best, all our lives would go away in deliberation and distraction, and we should never come to an action.

"5th. I have often thought that our state here in this world is a state of mediocrity, which is not capable of extremes, though on one side there may be great excellency and perfection; that we are not capable of continual rest, nor continual exercise, though the latter has certainly much more of excellence in it. We are not able to labour always with the body,

nor always with the mind; and, to come to our present purpose, we are not capable of living altogether exactly by a rule, not altogether without it, - not always retired, not always in company; but this being but an odd notion of mine, it may suffice only to have mentioned it, my authority being no great argument in the case; only give me leave to say, that if it holds true, it will be applicable in several cases, and be of use to us in the conduct of our lives and actions; but I have been too long already to enlarge on this fancy any further at present.

"As to our actions in general things, this in short I think:

"1st. That all negative precepts are always to be obeyed. "2nd. That positive commands only sometimes upon occasions; but we ought to be always furnished with the habits and dispositions to those positive duties against those occasions.

"3rd. That between these two; i. e. between unlawful, which are always, and necessary, quod hic et nunc, which are but sometimes, there is a great latitude, and therein we have our liberty, which we may use without scrupulously thinking ourselves obliged to that which in itself may be best. "If this be so, as I question not that you will conclude with me it is, the greatest cause of your scruples and doubts, I suppose, will be removed; and so the difficulties in the cases proposed will in a good measure be removed too. When I know from you whether I have guessed right or no, I may be encouraged to venture on two other causes, which I think may be concerned also in all the cases you propose; but, being of much less moment than this I have mentioned here, may be deferred to another time, and then considered en passant, before we come to take up the particular cases separately.

Memorandum. The two general causes that I suppose remaining, are: "1st. Thinking things inconsistent that are not; viz. worldly business and devotion. 2nd. Natural inconstancy of temper; where the cures are to be considered, at least as far as this inconstancy is prejudicial, for no further than that ought it to be cured."

"Sir, _____ 1678

"By yours of the 21st Nov. you assure me that in my last, on this occasion, I hit right on the principal and original cause of some inquiet you had upon the matter under consideration. I should have been glad to have known also, whether the cure I there offered were any way effectual; or wherein the reasons I gave came short of that satisfaction as to the point,

viz., that we are not obliged to do always that which is precisely best, as was desired. For I think it most proper to the subduing those enemies of our quiet-fear, doubts, and scruples, and for establishing a lasting peace, to do as those who design the conquest of new territories, viz. clear the country as we go, and leave behind us no enemies unmastered, no lurking-holes unsearched, no garrisons unreduced, which may give occasions to disorder and insurrection, and excite disturbances.

"If, therefore, in that, or any other papers, any of my arguments and reasonings shall appear weak and obscure; if they reach not the bottom of the matter, are wide of the particular case, or have not so cleared up the question in all the parts and extent of it, as to settle the truth with evidence and certainty, I must beg you to let me know what doubts still remain, and upon what reasons grounded, that so in our progress we may look upon those propositions that you are once thoroughly convinced of, to be settled and established truths,

of which you are not to doubt any more without new reasons that have not yet been examined. Or, on the other side, by your answers to my reasons I may be set right and recovered from an error. For as I write you nothing but my own thoughts (which is vanity enough-but you will have it so), yet I am not so vain as to imagine them infallible, and therefore expect from you that mutual great office of friendship, to show me my mistakes, and to reason me into a better understanding; for it matters not on which side the truth lies, so we do but find and embrace it.

"This way of proceeding is necessary on both our accounts; on mine, because in my friendship with you, as well as others, I design to gain by the bargain that which I esteem the great benefit of friendship, the rectifying my mistakes and errors, which makes me so willingly expose my crude extemporary thoughts to your view,

and lay them, such as they are, before you: and on your account also I think it very necessary, for your mind having been long accustomed to think it true, that the thing absolutely in itself best ought always indispensably to be done, you ought, in order to the establishing your peace perfectly, to examine and clear up that question,

so as at the end of the debate to retain it still for true, or perfectly reject it as a mistaken or wrong measure; and to settle it as a maxim in your mind, that you are no more to govern yourself or thoughts by that false rule, but wholly lay it aside as condemned, without putting yourself to the trouble, every time you reflect on it, to weigh again all those reasons upon which you made that conclusion; and so also in any other opinions or principles, when you once come to be convinced of their falsehood.

"If this be not done, it will certainly happen that this principle (and so of the rest), having been for a long time settled in your mind, will, upon every occasion, recur; and the reasons upon which you rejected it not being so

familiar to your mind, nor so ready at hand to oppose it, the old acquaintance will be apt to resume his former station and influence, and be apt to disturb that quiet which had not its foundation perfectly established.

"For these reasons it is that I think we ought to clear all as we go, and come to a plenary result in all the propositions that come under debate, before we go any further. This has been usually my way with myself, to which, I think, I owe a great part of my quiet; and, I believe, a few good principles, well established, will reach further, and resolve more doubts, than at first sight perhaps one would imagine; and the grounds and rules on which the right and wrong of our actions turn, and which will generally serve to conduct us in the cares and occurrences of our lives, in all states and conditions, lie possibly in a narrower compass, and in a less number, than is ordinarily supposed; but, to come to them, one must go by sure and well-grounded steps."

[The argument is continued at great length, with the intent of reconciling worldly business and devotion.]

1678.-HAPPINESS. That the happiness of man consists in pleasure, whether of body or mind, according to every one's relish. The summum malum is pain, or dolor of body and mind; that this is so, I appeal not only to the experience of all mankind, and the thoughts of every man's breast, but to the best rule of this-the Scripture, which tells that at the right-hand of God, the place of bliss, are pleasures for evermore; and that which men are condemned for, is not for seeking pleasure, but for preferring the momentary pleasures of this life to those joys which shall have no end. VIRTUE. To make a man virtuous, three things are necessary: 1st. Natural parts and disposition. 2nd. Precepts and instruction. 3rd. Use and practice; which is able better to correct the first, and improve the latter.

Judging Election Resolution

Judging is a bare action of the understanding, whereby a man, several objects being proposed to him, takes one of them to be best for him. But this is not Election?

Election, then is, when a man, judging anything to be best for him, ceases to consider, examine, and inquire any further concerning that matter; for, till a man comes to this, he has not chosen, the matter still remains with him under deliberation, and not determined

. Here, then, comes in the will, and makes Election voluntary, by stopping in the mind any further inquiry and examination. This Election sometimes proceeds further to Firm Resolution, which is not barely a stop to further inquiry by Election at that time, but the predetermination, as much as in him lies, of his will not to take the matter into any further deliberation; i. e. not to employ his thoughts any more about the eligibility, i. e. the suitability, of that which he has chosen to himself as making a part of his happiness. For example, a man who would be married has several wives proposed to him. He considers which would be fittest for him, and judges Mary best; afterwards, upon that continued judgment, makes choice of her; this choice ends his deliberation; he stops all further consideration whether she be best or no,

and resolves to fix here, which is not any more to examine whether she be best or fittest for him of all proposed; and consequently pursues the means of obtaining her, sees, frequents, and falls desperately in love with her, and then we may see Resolution at the highest; which is an act of the will, whereby he not only supersedes all further examination, but will not admit of any information or suggestion, will not hear anything that can be offered against the pursuit of this match.

Thus we may see how the will mixes itself with these actions, and what share it has in them; viz. that all it does is but exciting or stopping the operative faculties; in all which it is acted on more or less vigorously, as the uneasiness that presses is greater or less. At first, let us suppose his thoughts of marriage in general to be excited only by some consideration of some moderate convenience offered to his mind;

this moves but moderate desires, and thence moderate uneasiness leaves his will almost indifferent; he is slow in his choice amongst the matches offered, pursues coolly till desire grows upon him, and with it uneasiness proportionably, and that quickens his will; he approaches nearer, he is in love-is set on fire-the flame scorches-this makes him uneasy with a witness; then his will, acted by that pressing uneasiness, vigorously and steadily employs all the operative faculties of body and mind for the attainment of the beloved object, without which he cannot be happy.

Thus I Think

It is a man's proper business to seek happiness and avoid misery. Happiness consists in what delights and contents the mind; misery, in what disturbs, discomposes, or torments it. I will therefore make it my business to seek satisfaction and delight, and avoid uneasiness and disquiet; to have as much of the one, and as little of the other, as may be.

But here I must have a care I mistake not; for if I prefer a short pleasure to a lasting one, it is plain I cross my own happiness. Let me then see wherein consists the most lasting pleasures of this life; and that, as far as I can observe, is in these things: 1st. Health,-without which no sensual pleasure can have any relish.

2nd. Reputation,-for that I find everybody is pleased with, and the want of it is a constant torment.

3rd. Knowledge,-for the little knowledge I have, I find I would not sell at any rate, nor part with for any other pleasure. 4th. Doing good,-for I find the well-cooked meat I eat to-day does now no more delight me, nay, I am diseased after a full meal. The perfumes I smelt yesterday now no more affect me with any pleasure; but the good turn I did yesterday, a year, seven years since, continues still to please and delight me as often as I reflect on it. 5th. The expectation of eternal and incomprehensible happiness in another world is that also which carries a constant pleasure with it.

If then I will faithfully pursue that happiness I propose to myself, whatever pleasure offers itself to me, I must carefully look that it cross not any of those five great and constant pleasures above mentioned. For example, the fruit I see tempts me with the taste of it that I love, but if it endanger my health, I part with a constant and lasting for a very short and transient pleasure, and so foolishly make myself unhappy, and am not true to my own interest.

Hunting, plays, and other innocent diversions delight me: if I make use of them to refresh myself after study and business, they preserve my health, restore the vigour of my mind, and increase my pleasure; but if I spend all, or the greatest part of my time in them, they hinder my improvement in knowledge and useful arts, they blast my credit, and give me up to the uneasy state of shame, ignorance, and contempt, in which I cannot but be very unhappy.

Drinking, gaming, and vicious delights will do me this mischief, not only by wasting my time,

but by a positive efficacy endanger my health, impair my parts, imprint ill habits, lessen my esteem, and leave a constant lasting torment on my conscience; therefore all vicious and unlawful pleasures I will always avoid, because such a mastery of my passions will afford me a constant pleasure greater than any such enjoyments; and also deliver me from the certain evil of several kinds, that by indulging myself in a present temptation I shall certainly afterwards suffer.

All innocent diversions and delights, as far as they will contribute to my health, and consist with my improvement, condition, and my other more solid pleasures of knowledge and reputation, I will enjoy, but no further, and this I will carefully watch and examine, that I may not be deceived by the flattery of a present pleasure to lose a greater.

Of Ethics in General

1. Happiness and misery are the two great springs of human actions, and though through different ways we find men so busy in the world, they all aim at happiness, and desire to avoid misery, as it appears to them in different places and shapes.

2. I do not remember that I have heard of any nation of men who have not acknowledged that there has been right and wrong in men's actions, as well as truth and falsehood in their sayings; some measures there have been everywhere owned, though very different; some rules and boundaries to men's actions, by which they were judged to be good or bad; nor is there, I think, any people amongst whom there is not distinction between virtue and vice; some kind of morality is to be found everywhere received; I will not say perfect and exact, but yet enough to let us know that the notion of it is more or less everywhere, and that men think that even where politics, societies, and magistrates are silent, men yet are under some laws to which they owe obedience.

3. But, however morality be the great business and concernment of mankind, and so deserves our most attentive application and study; yet in the very entrance this occurs very strange and worthy our consideration, that morality hath been generally in the world rated as a science distinct from theology, religion, and law; and that it hath been the proper province of philosophers, a sort of men different both from divines, priests, and lawyers, whose profession it has been to explain and teach this knowledge to the world; a plain argument to me of some discovery still amongst men, of the law of nature, and a secret apprehension of another rule of action which rational creatures had a concernment to conform to, besides what either the priests pretended was the immediate command of their God (for all the heathen ceremonies of worship pretended to revelation, reason failing in the support of them), or the lawyer told them was the command of the Government.

4. But yet these philosophers seldom deriving these rules up to their original, nor arguing them as the commands of the great God of heaven and earth, and such as according to which he would retribute to men after this life, the utmost enforcements they could add to them were reputation and disgrace by those names of virtue and vice, which they endeavoured by their authority to make names of weight to their scholars and the rest of the people. Were there no human law, nor punishment, nor obligation of civil or divine sanctions, there would yet still be such species of actions in the world as justice, temperance, and fortitude, drunkenness, and theft, which would also be thought some of them good, some bad; there would be distinct notions of virtues and vices; for to each of these names there would belong a complex idea, or otherwise all these and the like words which express moral things in all languages would be empty, insignificant sounds, and all moral discourses would be perfect jargon. But all the knowledge of virtues and vices which a man attained to, this way, would amount to no more than taking the definitions or the significations of the words of any language, either from the men skilled in that language, or the common usage of the country, to know how to apply them, and call particular actions in that

country by their right names; and so in effect would be no more but the skill how to speak properly, or at most to know what actions in the country he lives in are thought laudable or disgraceful; i. e. are called virtues and vices: the general rule whereof, and the most constant that I can find is, that those actions are esteemed virtuous which are thought absolutely necessary to the preservation of society, and those that disturb or dissolve the bonds of community are everywhere esteemed ill and vicious.

5. This would necessarily fall out, for were there no obligation or superior law at all, besides that of society, since it cannot be supposed that any men should associate together and unite in the same community, and at the same time allow that for commendable, i. e. count it a virtue, nay not discountenance and treat such actions as blameable, i. e. count them vices which tend to the dissolution of that society in which they were united; but all other actions that are not thought to have such an immediate influence on society I find not (as far as I have been conversant in histories), but that in some countries or societies they are virtues, in others vices, and in others indifferent, according as the authority of some esteemed wise men in some places, or as inclination or fashion of people in other places, have happened to establish them virtues or vices; so that the ideas of virtues taken up this way teach us no more than to speak properly according to the fashion of the country we are in, without any very great improvement of our knowledge, more than what men meant by such words; and this is the knowledge contained in the common ethics of the schools; and this is not more but to know the right names of certain complex modes, and the skill of speaking properly.

6. The ethics of the schools, built upon the authority of Aristotle, but perplexed a great deal more with hard words and useless distinctions, telling us what he or they are pleased to call virtues and vices, teach us nothing of morality, but only to understand their names, or call actions as they or Aristotle does; which is, in effect, but to speak their language properly. The end and use of morality being to direct our lives, and by showing us what actions are good, and what bad, prepare us to do the one and avoid the other; those that pretend to teach morals mistake their business, and become only language-masters where they do not do this,-when they teach us only to talk and dispute, and call actions by the names they prescribe, when they do not show the inferments that may draw us to virtue and deter us from vice.

7. Moral actions are only those that depend upon the choice of an understanding and free agent. And an understanding free agent naturally follows that which causes pleasure to it and flies that which causes pain; i. e. naturally seeks happiness and shuns misery. That, then, which causes to any one pleasure, that is good to him; and that which causes him pain, is bad to him: and that which causes the greater pleasure is the greater good, and that which causes the greater pain, the greater evil. For happiness and misery consisting only in pleasure and pain, either of mind or body, or both, according to the interpretation I have given above of those words, nothing can be good or bad to any one but as it tends to their happiness or misery, as it serves to produce in them pleasure or pain: for good and bad, being relative terms, do not denote anything in the nature of the thing, but only the

relation it bears to another in its aptness and tendency to produce in it pleasure or pain; and thus we see and say, that which is good for one man is bad for another.

8. Now, though it be not so apprehended generally, yet it is from this tendency to produce to us pleasure or pain, that moral good or evil has its name, as well as natural. Yet perhaps it will not be found so erroneous as perhaps at first sight it will seem strange, if one should affirm, that there is nothing morally good which does not produce pleasure to a man, nor nothing morally evil that does not bring pain to him.

The difference between moral and natural good and evil is only this; that we call that naturally good and evil, which, by the natural efficiency of the thing, produces pleasure or pain in us; and that is morally good or evil which, by the intervention of the will of an intelligent free agent, draws pleasure or pain after it, not by any natural consequence, but by the intervention of that power. Thus, drinking to excess, when it produces the head-ache or sickness, is a natural evil; but as it is a transgression of law, by which a punishment is annexed to it, it is a moral evil. For rewards and punishments are the good and evil whereby superiors enforce the observance of their laws; it being impossible to set any other motive or restraint to the actions of a free understanding agent, but the consideration of good or evil; that is, pleasure or pain that will follow from it.

9. Whoever treats of morality so as to give us only the definitions of justice and temperance, theft and incontinency, and tells us which are virtues, which are vices, does only settle certain complex ideas of modes with their names to them, whereby we may learn to understand others well, when they talk by their rules, and speak intelligibly and properly to others who have been informed in their doctrine. But whilst they discourse ever so acutely of temperance or justice, but show no law of a superior that prescribes temperance, to the observation or breach of which law there are rewards and punishments annexed, the force of morality is lost,

and evaporates only into words, disputes, and niceties. And, however Aristotle or Anacharsis, Confucius, or any one amongst us, shall name this or that action a virtue or a vice, their authorities are all of them alike, and they exercise but what power everyone has, which is to show what complex ideas their words shall stand for: for without showing a law that commands or forbids them, moral goodness will be but an empty sound, and those actions which the schools here call virtues or vices, may by the same authority be called by contrary names in another country; and if these be nothing more than their decisions and determinations in the case, they will be still nevertheless indifferent as to any man's practice, which will by such kind of determinations be under no obligation to observe them.

10. But there is another sort of morality or rules of our actions, which though they may in many parts be coincident and agreeable with the former, yet have a different foundation, and we come to the knowledge of them a different way; those notions or standards of our actions not being ideas of our own making,

to which we give names, but depend upon something without us, and so not made by us, but for us, and these are the rules set to our actions by the

declared will or laws of another, who hath power to punish our aberrations;- these are properly and truly the rules of good and evil, because the conformity or disagreement of our actions with these bring upon us good or evil; these influence our lives as the other do our words, and there is as much difference between these two as between living well and attaining happiness on the one hand, compared with speaking properly and understanding of words on the other.

The notion of one men have by making to themselves a collection of simple ideas, called by those names which they take to be names of virtues and vices; the notion of the other we come by from the rules set us by a superior power: but because we cannot come to the knowledge of those rules without, 1st, making known a lawgiver to all mankind, with power and will to reward and punish; and, 2nd, without showing how he hath declared his will and law, I must only at present suppose this rule, till a fit place to speak of these, viz. God and the law of nature; and only at present mention what is immediately to the purpose in hand, 1st, that this rule of our actions set us by our law-maker is conversant about, and ultimately terminates in, those simple ideas before mentioned; viz. Thou shalt love they neighbour as thyself.

2nd., That the law being known, or supposed known by us, the relation of our actions to it, i.e. the agreement or disagreement of anything we do to that rule, is as easy and clearly known as any other relation. 3rd. That we have moral ideas as well as others, that we come by them the same way, and that they are nothing but collections of simple ideas. Only we are carefully to retain that distinction of moral actions, that they have a double consideration, 1st, As they have their proper denominations, as liberality, modesty, frugality, &c. &c., and thus they are but modes, i. e. actions made up of such a precise collection of simple ideas; but it is not thereby determined that they are either good or bad, virtues or vices. 2nd, As they refer to a law with which they agree or disagree, so are they good or bad, virtues or vices. Eutrapelia was a name amongst the Greeks, of such a peculiar sort of actions; i. e. of such a collection of simple ideas concurring to make them up; but whether this collection of simple ideas, called Eutrapelia, be a virtue or vice, is known only by comparing it to that rule which determines virtue or vice, and this is that consideration that properly belongs to actions, i. e. their agreement with a rule. In one, any action is only a collection of simple ideas, and so is a positive complex idea; in the other it stands in relation to a law or rule, and according as it agrees or disagrees, is virtue or vice. So education and piety, feasting and gluttony, are modes alike, being but certain complex ideas called by one name: but when they are considered as virtues and vices, and rules of life carrying an obligation with them, they relate to a law, and so come under the consideration of relation.

To establish morality, therefore, upon its proper basis, and such foundations as may carry an obligation with them, we must first prove a law, which always supposes a law-maker: one that has a superiority and right to ordain, and also a power to reward and punish according to the tenor of the law established by him. This sovereign law-maker, who has set rules

and bounds to the actions of men, is God, their Maker, whose existence we have already proved. The next thing then to show is, that there are certain rules, certain dictates, which it is his will all men should conform their actions to, and that this will of his is sufficiently promulgated and made known to all mankind.

DEUS.-Descartes's Proof of a God, from the Idea of necessary Existence, examined. 1696.

Though I had heard Descartes's opinion concerning the being of a God often questioned by sober men, and no enemies to his name, yet I suspended my judgment of him, till lately setting myself to examine his proof of a God, I found that by it senseless matter might be the first eternal being and cause of all things, as well as an immaterial intelligent spirit; this, joined to his shutting out the consideration of final causes out of his philosophy, and his labouring to invalidate all other proofs of a God but his own, does unavoidably draw upon him some suspicion.

The fallacy of his pretended great proof of a Deity appears to me thus:- The question between the Theists and Atheists I take to be this, viz. not whether there has been nothing from eternity, but whether the eternal Being that made, and still keeps all things in that order, beauty, and method, in which we see them, be a knowing immaterial substance, or a senseless material substance; for that something, either senseless matter, or a knowing spirit, has been from eternity, I think nobody doubts.

The idea of the Theists' eternal Being is, that it is a knowing immaterial substance, that made and still keeps all the beings of the universe in that order in which they are preserved. The idea of the Atheists' eternal Being is senseless matter.

The question between them then is, which of these really is that eternal Being that has always been. Now I say, whoever will use the idea of necessary existence to prove a God, i. e. an immaterial eternal knowing spirit, will have no more to say for it from the idea of necessary existence, than an Atheist has for his eternal, all-doing, senseless matter, v. g. The complex idea of God, says the Theist, is substance, immateriality, eternity, knowledge, and the power of making and producing all things.

I allow it, says the Atheist; but how do you prove any real being exists, answering the complex idea in which these simple ideas are combined? By another idea, says the Cartesian Theist, which I include in my complex idea of God, viz. the idea of necessary existence.

If that will do, says the Atheist, I can equally prove the eternal existence of my first being, matter; for it is but adding the idea of necessary existence to the one which I have wherein substance, extension, solidity, eternity, and the power of making and producing all things are combined, and my eternal matter is proved necessarily to exist upon as certain grounds as the immaterial God; for whatsoever is eternal must needs have necessary existence included in it. And who now has the odds in proving by adding in his mind the idea of necessary existence to his idea of the first being? The truth is in this way, that which should be proved, viz. existence, is supposed, and so the question is only begged on both sides.

I have the complex idea of substance, solidity, and extension joined together, which I call matter; does this prove matter to be? No. I, with Descartes, add to this idea of matter a bulk as large as space itself; does this prove such a bulk of matter to be? No. I add to it this complex idea, the idea of eternity; does this prove matter to be eternal? No. I add to it the idea of necessary existence; does this prove matter necessarily to exist? No.

Try it in spirit, and it will be just so there. The reason whereof is, that the putting together or separating, the putting in or leaving out, any one or more ideas, out of any complex one in my head, has no influence at all upon the being of things, without me to make them exist so, as I put ideas together in my mind.

But it will be said that the idea of God includes necessary existence, and so God has a necessary existence.

I answer: The idea of God, as far as the name God stands for the first eternal cause, includes necessary existence.

And so far the Atheist and the Theist are agreed; or rather, there is no Atheist who denies an eternal first Being, which has necessary existence. That which puts the difference between the Theist and the Atheist is this: that the Theist says that this eternal Being, which has necessary existence, is a knowing spirit; the Atheist, that it is blind unthinking matter; for the deciding of which question, the joining the idea of necessary existence to that of eternal first Being or Substance, does nothing. Whether that eternal first Being, necessarily existing, be material or immaterial, thinking or not thinking, must be proved some other way; and when thus a God is proved, necessary existence will be included in the idea of God, and not till then. For an eternal necessary existing Being, material, and without wisdom, is not the Theist's God. So that real existence is but supposed on either side; and the adding in our thoughts the idea of necessary existence to an idea of a senseless material substance, or to the idea of an immaterial knowing spirit, makes neither of them to exist, nor alters anything in the reality of their existence, because our ideas alter nothing in the reality of things, v. g. The Atheist would put into his idea of matter, necessary existence; he may do that as he pleases, but he will not thereby at all prove the real existence of anything answering that idea; he must first prove,

and that by other ways than that idea, the existence of an eternal all-doing matter, and then his idea will be proved evidently a true idea: till then it is but a precarious one, made at pleasure, and proves nothing of real existence, for the reason above mentioned, viz. our ideas make or alter nothing in the real existence of things, nor will it follow that anything really exists in nature answering it, because we can make such a complex idea in our minds.

By ideas in the mind we discern the agreement or disagreement of ideas that have a like ideal existence in our minds, but that reaches no further, proves no real existence, for the truth we so know is only of our ideas, and is applicable to things only as they are supposed to exist answering such ideas. But any idea, simple or complex, barely by being in our minds, is no evidence of the real existence of anything out of our minds, answering that idea. Real existence can be proved only by real existence; and, therefore, the

real existence of a God can only be proved by the real existence of other things. The real existence of other things without us can be evidenced to us only by our senses; but our own existence is known to us by a certainty yet higher than our senses can give us of the existence of other things, and that is internal perception, a self-consciousness, or intuition; from whence therefore may be drawn, by a train of ideas, the surest and most incontestable proof of the existence of a God.

1677.-Species

The species of things are distinguished and made by chance, in order to naming and names imposed on those things which either the conveniences of life or common observation bring into discourse. The greatest part of the rest, sine nomine herb?, lie neglected, neither differenced by names, nor distinguished into species; viz. how many flies and worms are there which, though they are about us in great plenty, we have not yet named nor ranked into species, but come under the general names of flies or worms, which yet are as distinct as a horse and a sheep, though we never have had so great occasion to take notice of them.

So that our ideas of species are almost voluntary, or at least different from the idea of Nature by which she forms and distinguishes them, which in animals she seems to me to keep to with more constancy and exactness than in other bodies and species of things: those being curious engines do perhaps require a greater accurateness for their propagation and continuation of their race; for in vegetables we find that several sorts come from the seeds of one and the same individual, as much different species as those that are allowed to be so by philosophers.

This is very familiar in apples, and perhaps other sorts of fruits, whereof some have distinct names and others only the general, though they begin every day to have more and more given them as they come into use. So that species, in respect of us, are but things ranked into order, because of their agreement inn some ideas which we have made essential in order to our naming them, though what is essentially to belong to any species in reference to Nature be hard to determine; for if a woman should bring forth a creature perfectly of the shape of a man, that never showed any more appearance of reason than a horse, and had no articular language, and another woman should produce another with nothing of the shape, but with the language and reason of a man, I ask which of these you would call by the name man?-both or neither?

Understanding Arguments Positive and Negative. 1677

In questions where there are arguments on both sides, one positive proof is to preponderate to a great many negatives, because a positive proof is always founded upon some real existence, whcih we know and apprehend; whereas the negative arguments terminate generally in nothing, in our not being able to conceive, and so may be nothing but conclusions from our ignorance or incapcity, and not from the truth of things which may, and we have experience do, really exist, though they exceed our comprehension. This amongst the things we know and lie obvious to our senses is very evident; for though we are very well acquainted with matter, motion, and distance, yet there are many things in them which we can by no means comprehend; for,

even in the things most obvious and familiar to us, our understanding is nonplussed, and presently discovers its weakness; whenever it enters upon the consideration of anything that is unlimited, or would penetrate into the modes or manner of being or operation, it presently meets with unconquerable difficulties.

Matter, and figure, and motion, and the degrees of both, we have clear notions of; but when we begin to think of the extension or divisibility of the one, or the beginning of either, our understanding sticks and boggles, and knows not which way to turn. We also have no other notion of operation but of matter by motion,-at least I must confess I have not, and should be glad to have any one explain to me intelligibly any other; and yet we shall find it hard to make out any phenomenon by those causes. We know very well that we think, and at pleasure move ourselves, and yet, if we will think a negative argument sufficient to build on, we shall have reason to doubt whether we can do one or other; it being to me inconceivable how matter should think, and as incomprehensible how an immaterial thinking thing should be able to move material, or be affected by it. We having therefore positive experience of our thinking and motion, the negative arguments against them, and the impossibility of understanding them, never shake our assent to these truths, which perhaps will prove a considerable rule to determine us in very material questions.

MEMORY-IMAGINATION-MADNESS.

MEMORY. When we revive in our minds the idea of anything that we have before observed to exist, this we call memory; viz. to recollect in our minds the idea of our father or brother. But when, from the observations we have made of divers particulars, we make a general idea to represent any species in general, as man; or else join several ideas together, which we never observed to exist together, we call it imagination. So that memory is always the picture of something, the idea whereof has existed before in our thoughts, as near the life as we can draw it; but imagination is a picture drawn in our minds without reference to a pattern.

And here it may be observed that the ideas of memory, like painting after the life, come always short, i. e. want something of the original.

For whether a man would remember the dreams he had in the night, or the sights of a foregoing day, some of the traces are always left out, some of the circumstances are forgotten; and those kind of pictures, like those represented successively by several looking-glasses, are the more dim and fainter the further they are off from the original object. For the mind, endeavouring to retain only the traces of the pattern, losing by degrees a great part of them, and not having the liberty to supply any new colours or touches of its own, the picture in the memory every day fades and grows dimmer, and oftentimes is quite lost.

But the imagination, not being tied to any pattern, but adding what colours, what ideas it pleases, to its own workmanship, making originals of its own which are usually very bright and clear in the mind, and sometimes to that degree that they make impressions as strong and as sensible as those ideas which come immediately by the senses from external objects,-so that the mind takes one for the other, and its own imagination for realities.

And in this, it seems, madness consists, and not in the want of reason; for allowing their imagination to be right, one may observe that madmen usually reason right from them: and I guess that those who are about madmen, will find that they make very little use of their memory, which is to recollect particulars past with their circumstances: but having any

particular idea suggested to their memory, fancy dresses it up after its own fashion, without regard to the original.

Hence also one may see how it comes to pass that those that think long and intently upon one thing,

come at last to have their minds disturbed about it, and to be a little cracked as to that particular. For by repeating often with vehemence of imagination the ideas that do belong to, or may be brought in about, the same thing, a great many whereof the fancy is wont to furnish, these at length come to take so deep and impression, that they all pass for clear truths and realities, though perhaps the greater part of them have at several times been supplied only by the fancy, and are nothing but the pure effects of the imagination.

This at least is the cause of several errors and mistakes amongst men, even when it does not wholly unhinge the brains, and put all government of the thoughts into the hands of the imagination; as it sometimes happens when the imagination, being much employed, and getting the mastery about any one thing, usurps the dominion over all the other faculties of the mind in all other. But how this comes about, or what it is that gives it on such an occasion that empire,-how it comes thus to be let loose, I confess, I cannot guess. If that were once known, it would be no small advance towards the easier curing of this malady; and perhaps to that purpose it may not be amiss to observe what diet, temper, or other circumstances they are, that set the imagination on fire, and make it active and imperious. This I think, that having often recourse to one's memory, and tying down the mind strictly to the recollecting things past precisely as they were,

may be a means to check those extravagant or towering flights of the imagination. And it is good often to divert the mind from that which it has been earnestly employed about, or which is its ordinary business, to other objects, and to make it attend to the informations of the senses and the things they offer to it. J. L. 1678.

MADNESS.

Madness seems to be nothing but a disorder in the imagination, and not in the discursive faculty; for one shall find amongst the distract, those who fancy themselves kings, &c., who discourse and reason right enough upon the suppositions and wrong fancies they have taken. And any sober man may find it in himself in twenty occasions, viz.-in a town where he has not been long resident, let him come into a street that he is pretty well acquainted with at the contrary end to what he imagined, he will find all his reasonings about it so out of order and so inconsistent with the truth, that should he enter into debate upon the situation of the houses, the turnings on the right or left hand, &c. &c., with one who knew the place perfectly, and had the right ideas which way he was going, he would seem little better than frantic.

This, I believe, most people may have observed to have happened to themselves, especially when they have been carried up and down in coaches, and perhaps may have found it sometimes difficult to set their thoughts right, and reform the mistakes of their imagination. And I have known some who, upon the wrong impressions which were at first made

upon their imaginations, could never tell which was north or south in Smithfield, though they were no very ill geographers: and when by the sun and the time of the day they were convinced of the position of that place, yet they could not tell how to reconcile it to other parts of the town that were adjoining to it, but out of sight; and were very apt to relapse again, as soon as either the sun disappeared,

or they were out of sight of the place, into the mistakes and confusion of their old ideas. From whence one may see of what moment it is to take care that the first impressions we settle upon our minds be conformable to the truth and to the nature of thing; or else all our meditations and discourse thereupon will be nothing but perfect raving.

ERROR.

The foundation of error and mistake in most men lies in having obscure or confused notions of things, or by reason of their confused ideas, doubtful and obscure words; our words always in their signification depending upon our ideas, being clear or obscure proportionably as our notions are so, and sometimes have little more but the sound of the word for the notion of the thing. For in the discursive faculty of the mind, I do not find that men are so apt to err; but it avails little that their syllogisms are right, if their terms be insignificant and obscure, or confused and indetermined, or that in their internal discourse deductions be regular, if their notions be wrong. Therefore, in our discourse with others, the greatest care is to be had that we be not misled or imposed on by the measure of their words, where the fallacy oftener lies than in faulty consequences.

And in considering by ourselves to take care of our notions, where a man argues right upon wrong notions or terms, he does like a madman; were he makes wrong consequences, he does like a fool: madness seeming to me to lie more in the imagination, and folly in the discourse.

SPACE.-1677

Space, in itself, seems to be nothing but a capacity, or possibility, for extended beings or bodies to be, or exist, which we are apt to conceive infinite; for there being in nothing no resistance, we have a conception very natural and very true, that let bodies be already as far extended as you will, yet, other new bodies should be created, they might exist where there are now no bodies: viz. a globe of a foot diameter might exist beyond the utmost superficies of all bodies now existing; and because we have by our acquaintance with bodies got the idea of the figure and distance of the superficial part of a globe of a foot diameter, we are apt to imagine the space where the globe exists to be really something, to have a real existence before and after its existence there. Whereas, in truth,

it is really nothing, and so has no opposition nor resistance to the being of such a body there; though we, applying the idea of a natural globe, are apt to conceive it as something so far extended, and these are properly the imaginary spaces which are so much disputed of. But as for distance, I suppose that to be the relation of two bodies or beings near or remote to one another, measurable by the ideas we have of distance taken from solid bodies; for were there no beings at all, we might truly say there were no distances. The fallacy we put upon ourselves which inclines us to think

otherwise is this, that whenever we talk of distance, we first suppose some real beings existing separate from one another, and then, without taking notice of that supposition,

and the relation that results from their placing one in reference to another, we are apt to consider that space as some positive real being existing without them: whereas, as it seems to me, to be but a bare relation; and when we suppose them to be, viz. a yard asunder, it is no more but to say extended in a direct line to the proportion of three feet or thirty-six inches distance, whereof by use we have got the idea: this gives us the notion of distance, and the vacuum that is between them is understood by this, that bodies of a yard long that come between them, thrust or remove away nothing that was there before.

1. I take it for granted that I can conceive a space without a body; for, suppose the universe as big as you will, I can, without the bounds of it, imagine it possible to thrust out or create any the most solid body of any figure, without removing from the place it possesses anything that was there before. Neither does it imply any contradiction to suppose a space so empty within the bounds of the universe, that a body may be brought into it without removing from thence any other' and if this be not granted, I cannot see how one can make out any motion supposing your bodies of what figures or bulk you please, as I imagine it is easy to demonstrate.

If it be possible to suppose nothing, or, in our thoughts, to remove all manner of beings from any place, then this imaginary space is just nothing, and signifies no more but a bare possibility that body may exist where now there is none. If it be impossible to suppose pure nothing, or to extend our thoughts where there is, or we can suppose, no being, this space void of body must be something belonging to the being of the Deity. But be it one or the other, the idea we have of it we take from the extension of bodies which fall under our senses; and this idea of extension being settled in our minds, we are able, by repeating that in our thoughts, without annexing body or impenetrability to it, to imagine spaces where there are no bodies-which imaginary spaces, if we suppose all other beings absent, are purely nothing, but merely a possibility that body might there exist. Or if it be a necessity to suppose a being there, it must be God, whose being we thus make, i. e. suppose extended, but not impenetrable: but be it one or the other, extension seems to be mentally separable from body, and distance nothing but the relation of space, resulting from the existence of two positive beings; or, which is all one, two parts of the same being.

Relation Space. 1678

Besides the considering things barely and separately in themselves, the mind considers them also with respect, i. e. at the same time looking upon some other, and this we call relation. So that if the mind so considers anything that another is necessarily supposed, this is relation; there is that which necessarily makes us consider two things at once, or makes the mind look on two things at once, and hence it is that relative terms or words that signify this relation so denominate one thing, as that they always intimate or denote another; viz. father, countryman, bigger, distant;

so that whatsoever necessarily occasions two things, looked on as distinct, this connection in our thoughts of whatsoever it be founded in, that is properly relation, which perhaps may serve to give a little light to that great obscurity which has caused so much dispute about the nature of space, whether it be something or nothing, created or eternal. For when we speak of space (as ordinarily we do) as the abstract distance, it seems to me to be a pure relation, and we call it distance; but when we consider it as the distance or space between the extremities of a continued body,

whose continued parts do, or are supposed to, fill all the interjacent space, we call it extension, and it is looked on to be a positive inherent property of the body, because it keeps constantly with it, always the same, and every particle has its share of it; whereas, whether you consider the body in whole mass, or in the least particles of the body, it appears to me to be nothing but the relation of the distance of the extremities. But when we speak of space in general, abstract and separate from all consideration of any body at all or any other being; it seems not then to be any real thing, but the consideration of a bare possibility of body to exist: to this, I foresee, there will lie two great objections:-

1st. The Cartesians will except against me as speaking of space without body, which they make to be the same thing; to whom let me say, that if spacium be corpus, and corpus spacium, then it is as true too that extensio is corpus, and corpus extensio, which is a pretty harsh kind of expression and that which is so distant from truth, that I do not remember that I have anywhere met with it from them; and yet I would fain know any other difference between extensio and spacium than that which I have above mentioned. If they will say *omne extensum et omnis res positiva extensa corpus, et vice versâ,*

I fully consent. But then it is only to say that body is the only being capable of distance between its own parts, which is extension (for I do not know why angels may not be capable of the relation of distance, in respect of one another), which shows plainly the difference of the words extension, which is for distance, a part of the same body, or that which is considered but as one body, and that of space, which is the distance between any two beings, without the consideration of body interjacent.

Besides this, there seems to me this great and essential difference between space and body, that body is divisible into separable parts, but space is not. This, I think, is so plain that it needs no proof; for if one take a piece of matter, of an inch square, for example, and divide it into two, the parts will be separated if set at further distance one from another; but yet

nobody, I think, amongst those who are most for the reality of space, say the parts of space are or can be removed to a further distance one from another. And he that, imagining the idea of a space of an inch square, can tell how to separate the parts of it, and remove them one from another, has, I confess, a much more powerful fancy than I.

It is no more strange, therefore, that extension, which is the relation of distance between parts of the same being, should be proper only to body, which alone has parts, than that the relation of filiation should be proper only to men.

To my supposition, that space, as it may be conceived antecedent to and void of all bodies, or, if you will, all determinate beings, is nothing but the idea of the possibility of the existence of body; for, when one says there is space for another world as big as this, it seems to me to be no more than there is no repugnancy why another world as big as this might not exist; and in this sense space may be said to be infinite; and so in effect space, as antecedent to body, or some determinate being, is in effect nothing-To this I say will be objected, that space being, as it is, capable of greater and less, cannot properly be nothing.

To this I say, that space, antecedent to all determinate beings, is not capable of greater or less. The mistake lies in this, that we, having been accustomed to the measures of a foot, an ell, a mile, &c. &c., can easily frame ideas of them, where we suppose no body to be even beyond the bounds of the world, but our having ideas in our head proves not the existence of anything without us. But you will say, is not the space of a foot beyond the extremity of the universe less than the space of a yard? I answer, yes; that the idea of one, which I place there, is bigger than the idea of the other; but that there is anything real there existing, I deny; or by saying or imagining the space of a foot or yard beyond the extremity of the world, would suppose or mean anything more than that a body of a foot or a yard (of which I have the idea) may exist there, I deny. Indeed, should a body be placed a foot distant from the utmost extremity of the universe, one might say it was a foot distant from the world, which seems to me to be a bare relation, resulting from its position there, without supposing that space to be any real being existing there before, and interposed between them, but only that a real body of such dimensions may be placed between them without removing them further one from the other. For the relation makes itself appear in this, that whatsoever is so spoke of requires its correlative; and therefore, speaking of the universe, one cannot say it is distant, because without it we suppose no other determinate or finite being which may be the other term of this relation.

It will be answered, perhaps, that one may suppose a point in that empty space, and then say it is a foot from that point. I answer, one may as easily suppose a body as a point, if the point be quid reale; if not, it being nothing, one cannot say the extremity or superficies of the world is a foot from nothing; so that be it a point, or body, or what other being one pleases, that is supposed there, it is evidence there is always required some real existence to be the other term of the relation.

And after all the suppositions that can be made, it can never truly be said that the utmost superficies of the world is a foot distant from anything, if there be nothing really existing beyond it, but only that imaginary space.

That which makes us so apt to mistake in this point, I think, is this, that having been all our lifetime accustomed to speak ourselves, and hear all others speak of space, in phrases that import it to be a real thing, as to occupy or take up so much space, we come to be possessed with this prejudice, that it is a real thing, and not a bare relation. And that which helps to it is, that by constant conversing with real sensible things, which have this relation of distance one to another, which we, by the reason just now mentioned, mistake for a real positive thing, we are apt to think that it as really exists beyond the utmost extent of all bodies, or finite beings, though there be no such beings there to sustain it, as it does here amongst bodies, which is not true. For though it be true that the black lines drawn on a rule have the relation one to another of an inch distance, they being real sensible things; and though it be also true that I, knowing the idea of an inch, can imagine that length without imagining body, as well as I can imagine a figure without imagining body; yet it is no more true that there is any real distance in that which we call imaginary space, than that there is any real figure there.

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