

Curfory Reflections

UPON A

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CALL'D, AN

E S S A Y

CONCERNING

Human Understanding.

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In a Letter to a Friend.

L O N D O N,

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Cursory Reflections upon a Book call'd,
An Essay concerning Human
Understanding.

S I R,

YOU obliged me so highly by acquainting me with the Publication of so rare a Curiosity as Mr. *Lock's* Book, that should I dispute your Commands when you desire my Opinion of it, I should hazard the Credit of my *Gratitude*, as much as by my ill discharging them I am like to do that of my *Judgment*. This, Sir, already reduces me to an even Poise. But to this the just Authority you have over me, and the Right your other Obligations give you to all the Service I can do, being added, and thrown into the Scale, do quite weigh it down, and leave no room for any Deliberation, whether I should obey you or no. Without therefore any further Demur or Delay I shall apply my self to the
Task

Task you set me, in giving you my *Free Censure* of Mr. *Lock's* Essay, which I shall do by reflecting upon what I think most liable to Exception in the same Order as the things lie before me.

Introduct. Pag. 1. Sect. 1. *The Understanding like the Eye, whilst it makes us see and perceive all other things, takes no notice of it self.* What the Ingenious Author intends in this Period, or how to make out any consistent Sense of it, I do not understand. For if his meaning be, That the Understanding while it is intent upon other things, cannot at that time take notice of it self; this comes to no more, than that when 'tis intent upon one thing it cannot attend to another, which is too easily and obviously true of all *Finite Powers* to be any great Discovery. But if his meaning be (as it rather seems, because of the Particle (All) and the Comparison here used) that the Understanding like the Eye, tho it makes us see all other things, yet it takes no notice of it self, then 'tis a Contradiction to his whole following Work, which upon this Supposition must needs be very *unaccountably* undertaken.

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Introduct. Pag. 2. Sect. 3. *First I shall enquire into the Original of those Ideas which a Man observes, &c.* But sure by all the Laws of Method in the World, he ought *first* to have Defined what he meant by Ideas, and to have acquainted us with their *Nature*, before he proceeded to account for their Origination. For how can any Proposition be form'd with any certainty concerning an Idea, that it is or is not *Innate*, that it does or does not come in at the Senses, before the meaning of the Word Idea be stated, and the nature of the thing, at least in general, be understood? If the Nature of Ideas were but once made known, our Disputes would quickly be at an end concerning their Original, whether from the Senses or not: But till that be done, all further Discourse about them is but to talk in the *Dark*. This therefore ought to have been his *first*, and indeed *main* Business to have given us an account of the Nature of Ideas. And yet this is not only neglected in its proper place, but wholly omitted and passed over in deep silence; which

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I cannot but remark, as a *Fundamental* defect in this Work.

In the three following Chapters our Author sets himself to prove that there are no *Innate Principles*. But before I consider whether there be or no, I premise this double Remarque. First, That a thing may be false in it self, and yet not so because, or in vertue of such an Argument. Secondly, That tho a thing be really false, yet it may not become such a Man to deny the Existence of it, who by some other Principles of his may be obliged to hold the contrary. The first of these argues the Writer guilty of *Inconsequence*. The Second of *Inconsistency*. Upon both which Accounts this otherwise very ingenious Writer seems in this part to be chargeable. Which from the Sequel I leave to be collected.

His First Argument against *Innate Principles* is taken from the want of Universal Consent. *There are*, says he, Pag. 5. Sect. 4. *No Principles to which all Mankind give an universal Assent*. But in the first place how can this Author

thor say so, since in several places afterwards he resolves that Ready and prone Assent which is given to certain Propositions upon the first Proposal, into the *Self-evidence* of them? There are then even according to him *Self-evident* Propositions. And will he say that Self-evident Propositions are not universally assented to? How then are they Self-evident? There must be therefore, according to him, some Principles to which all Mankind *do* give an universal Consent. I do not say that this proves them *Innate*, but only that there are such Propositions.

Well, but how does he prove there are no such? why, he instances in some of the most Celebrated, and says pag. 5. Sect. 5. that *All Children and Ideots have not the least apprehension or thought of them; and the want of that is enough to destroy universal consent*. Now I always thought that Universality of Consent had been sufficiently secured by the Consent of all, and the Dissent of none that were capable of either. And what then have we to do with *Ideots* and *Children*? Do any or all of these *Dissent* or think otherwise? No, that

that he will not say, because they think not at all, having (as he says) not the *least Apprehension or Thought of them*. And how then does the want of their *Suffrage* destroy universal Consent, when all Persons that think at all about such Propositions, think after one and the same way?

The most therefore that this Author can mean by want of Universal Consent, is that every individual Person does not *actually Assent*. This perhaps may be granted him from the Instance of *Idiots and Children*. But then the Question will be about the *Consequence* of his Argument, whether Actual Assent from every Individual be necessary to the Supposition of *Innate Principles*? Or, in other Words, whether from there not being any Propositions to which every individual Man gives an actual Assent, it follows that there are no Innate Truths. The Author is of Opinion that it does. *For,* says he, pag. 5. Sect. 5. *It seems to me near a Contradiction to say, that there are Truths imprinted on the Soul, which it perceives or understands not.* And again in the same place, *To imprint any thing*

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concerning Human Understanding.

on the Mind, without the Mind's perceiving it, seems to me hardly intelligible. And again, p. 12. Sect. 24. *That a Truth should be Innate, and yet not assented to, is to me as unintelligible as for a Man to know a Truth, and be ignorant of it at the same time.* Here we have both the *Consequence* of the Author, and the *Ground* upon which it stands. The *Consequence* is this. If there be no Truths actually perceiv'd by all Minds, then there are none naturally imprinted. The *Proof* of it is this. 'Tis impossible that what is imprinted on the Mind, should not be perceiv'd by the Mind. Therefore if there be no Truths actually perceiv'd by all Minds, there are none naturally imprinted. Now on the contrary to this I thus oppose. If there may be Impressions made on the Mind, whereof we are not conscious, or which we do not perceive, then (by the Authors own measure) the not perception of them is no Argument against such Original Impressions. The *Consequence* is unexceptionable, not only as clear in it self, but as being the very *Reverse* of the Author's own Argument. And now that there may be such Impressions whereof we are not Conscious, is what

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the Author himself expressly does own, and what by his Principles he stands obliged to own.

First, 'tis what he does expressly own. For, says he, p. 38. Sect. 6. *Being surrounded with Bodies that perpetually and diversly affect us, variety of Ideas, whether care be taken about it or no, are imprinted on the minds of Children.* And yet they do not perceive them, as he had said before. Therefore by his own Confession there may be an Impression of Ideas where there is no Perception. The same he confesses again, p. 61. Sect. 4. *How often may a Man observe in himself, that whilst his mind is intently employ'd in the contemplation of some Objects, and curiously surveying some Ideas that are there, it takes no notice of Impressions, &c.* And again, Sect. 5. *I doubt not but Children by the exercise of their Senses about Objects that affect them in the Womb, receive some few Ideas before they are born, &c.* And if before they are born, then certainly before they are conscious of them. There may therefore be Impression without Consciousness. Which he also plainly implies in his Account of Memory.

mory. Which he does not make to be a recovery of Ideas that were *Lost*, but a Re-advertency or Re-application of Mind to Ideas that are actually there, tho' not attended to. For, says he, p. 65. Sect. 2. *The narrow mind of man not being capable of having many Ideas under View and Consideration at once, it was necessary to have a Repository, to lay up those Ideas, which at another time it might have use of.* And accordingly p. 66. Sect. 7. He calls them *Ideas which are lodg'd in the memory.* And pag. 67 Sect. 8. He calls them *Dormant Ideas.* So that according to him to *remember* is to retrieve, not the Ideas themselves, (for they are supposed to lie *Dormant* in the Mind) but only the *Perception* or Consciousness of them. This he makes to be the business of Memory, and therefore there may be an imprinting of Ideas without Actual perception, which may now, it seems, stand well enough together without any danger of a *Contradiction.*

And to the Acknowledgment of this, his own Principles will also oblige him. For since in conformity to the *Aristotelian* Philosophy, he makes all

our Ideas to be derived from our Senses, or rather by our Senses from sensible Objects, he must needs suppose (considering the variety of sensible Objects wherewith we are surrounded) that there are infinitely more Ideas impress'd upon our Minds than we can possibly attend to or perceive. Which may also be argued from the Finiteness of our Faculties, as was hinted in the beginning.

Well then, since there may be an Impression of Ideas without any actual Perception of them, whether there be any *Innate Ideas* or no (which I shall not now dispute) it does not therefore follow that there are none, because they are not universally perceiv'd. Which utterly *silences* that Argument taken from the Non-perception of them in Children. And since our Author both does, and is by his Principles obliged to allow that there are many Ideas impress'd upon us when we have no actual Perception of them, it does not certainly become him, tho there were really no such thing as *Innate Ideas*; and tho the Non-perception of them were an Argument against them,

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to bring this as an Argument against the Existence of any such, because they are not universally perceiv'd. This is not to agree with *himself*, however he may agree with *Truth*.

Our ingenious Author further argues against *Innate Principles* from the *Lateness* of the Perception of such which are presumed to be of that number, in that they are not the first that possess the Minds of Children. *Can it be imagin'd* (says he, pag. 13. Sect. 25.) *that those perceive the Impression from things without, and are at the same time ignorant of those Characters which Nature it self has taken care to stamp within?* This I take to be a very uncertain way of arguing, and of less Cogency than the Former. For if *Nullity* of Perception will not conclude against *Innate Principles*, much less will the *Lateness* of Perception be able to do it. And besides, there may be many Reasons drawn from the inward, and to us unknown Contexture of our Minds, and from the manner of that Original Impression (if any such there be) which would also be to us equally unknown, besides the Order of Education

Circumstances, that may be the Cause why these natural Characters may not be so soon read as some others. And therefore I do not see what sufficient ground the Author has for saying, Sect. 26. *That if there be any Innate Truths, they must necessarily be the first of any thought on.* Why? Where is the necessity? The reason given by the Author is because, *If they are Innate Truths, they must be Innate Thoughts.* Are then Truths and Thoughts the same? Indeed Truth of the Subject is the same with a conformable Thought. But Truth of the Object is not the Thought it self, but that which is thought upon. And why then must Innate Truths be Innate Thoughts?

But our Author proceeds to another Argument wherein he places more Strength. *If, says he, pag. 13. Sect. 27. These Characters were native and Original Impressions, they would appear fairest and clearest in those Persons in whom yet we find no footsteps of them.* He means in Children, who, he says, have no Reserves, no Arts of Concealment to hinder them from shining out in their full Lustre. But how does the
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Author know but that this Natural Impression may be so order'd that it shall not become legible till such a certain Period of time and without such and such Laws and Conditions? We know very well that we do not come to the use of Thinking in general till such a certain Period of Time, and the Author himself confesses *Pag. 12. Sect. 25. That there is a time when Children begin to think;* And why then may there not be a time set for the arising of such and such particular Thoughts? And how can he tell that Childhood is that time? Or if it be, why do not the Ideas impressed by sensible Objects appear fairest in Children for the same Reasons? If there be any force in this Argument, the Authors own *Hypothesis* is as much concern'd in it, as that which he would overthrow.

Come we now to his Arguments against *Innate Practical Principles*, the first of which is from their not being universally assented to. But what does he here mean by their not being universally consented to? That they are not actually assented to by every Individual whether capable or not? Or

that they are not consented to by all that judge any thing about them; If the former, that proves nothing, as we have shewn already; If the latter, then I deny the Proposition, and affirm that there are not only as *Certain* but as *Uncontested* Propositions in Morality as in any other Science. But our Author demands, *Pag. 15. Sect. 2. Where is that Practical Truth that is universally received?* I answer by referring him to the 274 Page of his own Book, where he says *Sect. 18.* That this Proposition, *Where there is no Propriety there is no Injustice*, is a Proposition as certain as any Demonstration in *Euclid*; I add and as plain too. It needing nothing to assure the Truth of it but only the Explication of the Terms. And I further remarque that in the same place he says that Morality may be placed among the Sciences capable of Demonstration. Well then, if there may be Propositions demonstrated in Morality, then those Propositions must at last be resolved into *Principles evident and incontestable*. Since otherwise there can be no Demonstration. There are therefore incontestable Principles in Morality. And
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he confesses as much in express terms; *I doubt not*, says he in the same place, *but from Principles as incontestable as those of the Mathematicks, by necessary Consequences, the measures of Right and Wrong might be made out to any one, &c.* Here he expressly owns incontestable Principles in Morality, that is, incontestable Truths, that is, Truths that cannot be denied, and therefore *must* be assented to. And how then can he with any tolerable *Self-Consistency* say that there are no Moral Principles universally consented to? If none are universally consented to, then all are by some contested. And yet he says there are in Morality incontestable Principles. How to adjust this I no more know, than he does to reconcile *Morality* and *Mechanism*.

His next Argument is, That *there cannot any one Moral Rule be proposed whereof a Man may not justly demand a Reason, Pag. 16. Sect. 4.* Well, what then? Therefore they are not *Innate*. I do not see the Consequence. Why may not the same Proposition be *Innate*, and yet deducible from Reason

son too, as well as the same Proposition be the Object of both *Faith* and *Science*? Why may not Conclusions be Innate as well as Principles? Why may not God be supposed for a further Security of our Vertue to implant even those Practical Propositions upon our Minds, which are also capable of being demonstrated from Principles of Reason? Whether he has so done or no I do not dispute; I only say that their Dependence on Reason is no Argument that he has not.

He argues again, *Pag. 18. Sect. 9.* from Mens *transgressing* these Moral Rules with Confidence and Serenity, which he says they could not do, were they *Innate*. I do not apprehend here the least Appearance of a Consequence. Why may not an *Innate Law* be transgress'd as well as a *Written Law*? An Innate Law only dictates that such a thing ought or ought not to be done, and so does a Written Law. He might therefore as well have concluded that there is no Written Law because it is Transgress'd, as that there is no Innate Law because it is Transgress'd.

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The Author seems to have been sensible of the Weakness of this Argument, and therefore to strengthen it, says he, *Pag 19. Sect. 12.* *The breaking of a Rule say you is no Argument that it is unknown; I grant it, But the generally allow'd Breach of it any where, is a Proof that it is not Innate.* Here I remarque by the way that he grants that the Breaking of a Law does not prove it *not known*, and why then should it prove it *not Innate*? If a known Law may be transgressed, why may not an Innate Law; Innate being only another way of being known? But says he, *The generally allow'd Breach of it proves it not Innate.* I do not see the Necessity of this neither. The allow'd Breach of a Law is only a more aggravated Breach of it, and if the Breach of a Law does not prove it not to be Innate, why should the allow'd Breach of it do so? And besides, why may not an Innate Law be *Allowedly* broken as well as a *Written Law*?

But says our Author, *Pag. 21. Sect. 14.* *Did Men find such Innate Propositions stamp'd*

stamp'd on their Minds, they would be easily able to distinguish them from other Truths, and there would be nothing more easie than to know what and how many they were. Perhaps not so very easie. For I see no absurdity in Supposing, and tis what I can very well conceive, that a Man may be sensible of a *Truth impress'd*, and yet not of the *Impression*, and so may not know that it is impress'd, but think it came some other way, and consequently may not be able to distinguish it from some other that does so. The truth of this may be seen in the Instance of *Inspiration*. Since there have been Prophets (*Caia- phas* for one) who were not able to distinguish Divine Inspirations from their own proper genuin Thoughts. 'Tis therefore no Consequence to say that there are no Innate Principles, because we cannot distinguish them.

Joh. II. 51.

These are the main Arguments, and to which all that is further offered may be reduced, whereby this Author impugns the Doctrin of *Innate Principles*; and I think neither any nor all of them are sufficient for the Cause wherein they are engaged. And I am so far from
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being surprized at their *Deficiency*, that I think it absolutely impossible for him or any Man else upon his Principles, to prove that there are no *Innate Truths*. For since with those of the Peripatetic School he allows that Ideas are impress'd upon the Mind from sensible Objects, he cannot (as another might) object against the *Possibility* of such Impressions. He cannot say they are capable only of a Figurative and Metaphorical Sense; Since according to him the same is literally and really done every Day, every Hour, every Minute. No, he must grant that 'tis possible there may be such Impressions. All the Question then will be concerning the *Timing* of it, whether any of these Impressions be Original Characters or no! And why may they not be at first as well as afterwards? How can he or any man else tell (upon his Principles) whether the Author of Nature has imprinted any such or no? Or whether we brought any with us into the World or no? However that be, I am satisfy'd 'tis impossible for any man that holds *Mental Impressions* to prove the contrary; especially if with that he
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allows the Possibility of *Preexistence*, which I believe no considering Man will say is Impossible.

For my part, I do as little believe there are any such things as Innate Principles strictly and properly so called, meaning by them certain Original Characters written upon or interwoven with the Mind in the very first Moment of its Being and Constitution, I say I do as little believe this as the Author himself. Not for the Reasons by him alledged, with the Cogency of which I am not satisfy'd, but because I do not allow any such thing as *Mental Impressions*, or Characters written upon the mind, which if it pretend to any thing more than Figure and Metaphor, I take to be mere *Jargon*, and unintelligible *Cant*. You know Sir I account for the Mode of *Human Understanding* after a very different way, namely, by the Presentialness of the Divine λόγος or Ideal World to our Souls, wherein we see and perceive all things. For a fuller account of which I refer you to my *Reason and Religion*, and to my *Reflections* lately publish'd. I cannot
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therefore by my Principles admit of any such Innate Characters in a strict and proper Sense. Only I may, and am also inclined to admit something of near Analogy with it. Supposing that God may and does exhibit some particular Truths of the *Ideal World* more early, more clearly, and more constantly to the view of the Soul than others, that by these she may be the better directed to the Good of the Reasonable Life, as Animals by sensitive Instincts and Inclinations are to the Good of Sense. This is all that I conceive to be strictly either *Possible* or *True* in that grey-headed venerable Doctrin of Innate or Common Principles.

Having thus far considered our Author's Impugnation of Innate Principles, I come now to examin the Original which he gives to *Ideas*. These he derives *Book 2. Chap. 1.* from this double Fountain, *Sensation* and *Reflection*. Especially from the Former, telling us again and again, that *the Senses let in Ideas and furnish the yet empty Cabinet*, Pag.8. Sect 15. That *the Senses convey into the mind several distinct*

distinct Perceptions of things, Pag. 37. Sect. 2. And that *the Senses do furnish the Soul with Ideas to think on*, Pag. 44. Sect. 20. with many other such Expressions.

These indeed are pretty *Smiling Sentences*. But before we go a Step further I would willingly know of the Author what kind of things these Ideas are which are thus let in at the Gate of the Senses. This indeed I expected an Account of in the beginning of the Work; but since the Author has been pleased to cast a *Shade* upon this Part, I now demand, what are these Ideas? Why you shall know that presently, *Whatever the Mind perceives in it self, or is the immediate Object of Perception, that I call Idea*, says he, pag. 55. sect. 8. Very good; So much my Lexicon would have told me. But this does not satisfy. I would know what kind of things he makes these Ideas to be as to their *Essence* or *Nature*. Are they in the first place Real Beings or not? Without doubt Real Beings, as having Real Properties, and really different one from another, and representing things really different. Well, if
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Real Beings, then I demand, are they Substances, or are they Modifications of Substances? He will not say they are *Modifications*. For besides that a Modification of Substance cannot be a Representative of a Substance, there being no manner of likeness between a Substance and a Mode; if an Idea be a Modification only it cannot subsist by it self, but must be the Modification of some Substance or other, whereof also there may be an Idea; which Idea being (as is supposed) only a Mode, must have another Substance, and so on without end. As for example, If my Idea of *Figure* be only a Mode, then it must have a Substance wherein to exist as well as Figure it self, which cannot exist alone; and since of that Substance whatever it be, there may be also an Idea, which is supposed to be a Modification, this Idea must also have another Substance, and so on to Infinity. He will not therefore, I suppose, say that our Ideas are *Modifications*.

He must then say that they are *Substances*. Are they then Material Substances or Immaterial? If he says they
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are *Material* Substances or Corporeal Emanations from sensible Objects, I would desire him to weigh with himself, and try if he can answer, what is alledged by *M. Malebranch* against the Possibility of such Emanations. Particularly, let him tell me how this can consist with the *Impenetrability* of Bodies, which must needs hinder these Corporeal Effluvias from possessing the same *Ubi* or Point, which yet must be supposed, if these be the Representers of Objects, since there is no assignable Point where the same, and where multitudes of Objects may not be seen. This one Difficulty is enough to make this way *impassable*. But let him further tell me how any Body can eradicate such an inconceivable Number of these Effluvias so as to fill every Point of such vast Spaces, without the least sensible Diminution. Well, but suppose they could, let him tell me how these Corporeal Effluvias, sometimes of vast Extent and Magnitude, can enter the Eye; Or if they could, how they can do it in such Troops and Numbers without jostling, refringing, and inverting one another. Or if this might be avoided, where shall we find

find room to receive such a numerous Company of Corporeal Images? And upon what part will you have them impressed? Upon the Soul? or upon the Brain? But who can understand either of these? How can an Indivisible Substance, as the Soul is, receive any Stamp or Impression? And how can such a fluid Substance as the Brain is, retain any? The least jog of a Mans Head must needs obliterate such slight and Aerial Traces, as the Wind does the Figures that are written upon the Sand; Not to say that these Impressions coming on so thick one upon another must needs work out themselves almost as soon as they are in, and in a short time consume the very Brain too. But suppose we could get over all this, yet the greatest Difficulty is yet behind; How will such Corporeal Effluvias be able to represent immaterial and intellectual Objects? They will at the most be able but to represent Material Objects, and not all of them neither, but only those whose Emanations they are. And what shall we do with Ideas that will not do their Office, that cannot represent a quarter of the things which we are concern'd to understand? T 2 These

These and a thousand more Absurdities must be waded through that will assert our Ideas to be Corporeal Effluvias derived from external Objects. It remains then that they must be *Immaterial* Substances. And so without all question they are. *All* of them as to their *Essence*, and *most* of them as to their *Representation*. But how shall Bodies send forth such Immaterial Species? They can emit nothing but what is Corporeal, like themselves. How then shall they commence Immaterial? Body can no more *emit* Spirit, than it can *create* it. And what is there after Emission that shall be the Principle of Transformation? Some I know talk of strange Feats done by the Dexterity of *Intellectus Agens* and *Patiens*, which they say refine and spiritualize these Material Phantasms; but I suppose our Author is of too Philosophical a Faith to admit of such a *Romantick Transubstantiation*.

The short of this Argument is, If our Ideas are derived from sensible Objects, then they are Material Beings, because Matter can send forth nothing
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but Matter. But they are not Material Beings, for the Reasons alledg'd above. Therefore they are not derived from Sensible Objects. Which I think has the force of Demonstration. And to this purpose it may be further consider'd (what I hinted before) that as our Ideas are all of them Immaterial as to their Essence and Substance, so many, perhaps most of them, are also immaterial as to their Representation, that is, they represent after an immaterial manner, as the Ideas of Truth, Vertue, and the like, which *Cartesius* Meditat.6. p. 36. makes to be the difference between *Imagination* and *Pure Intellection*, and whereof he gives an Instance in the Example of a *Chiliagon*, whose Angles we cannot represent in a distinct View, but may clearly *understand* it. But now how can that which represents after an immaterial manner come from sensible Objects? Again, we have Ideas of things that are not to be found in the Material and Sensible World, as of a Right Line, or an exact Circle, which our Author himself confesses, *pag. 283. Sect. 6.* not to be really extant in Nature. And what does he think of the Idea of *God*? Will he say that *that* is

also derived from sensible Objects? Yes: For, says he, pag. 147. Sect. 33. *If we examin the Idea we have of the Incomprehensible Supreme Being, we shall find that we come by it the same way, that is, by Sensation.* But in the first place, how does this agree with what he says, pag. 341. Sect. 2. *That we have the knowledge of the existence of all things without us (except only of God) by our Senses?* So then it seems we do not know the Existence of God by our Senses. No? then neither have we the Idea of him by our Senses. For if we had, why should we not know his Existence by Sensation as well as the Existence of other things, which, as he says, we know only by Sensation? For, says he, pag. 311. Sect. 2. *speaking of the knowledge of Existence, We have the knowledge of our own existence by Intuition, of the existence of God by Demonstration, and of other things by Sensation.* Then it seems we do not know the Existence of God by Sensation, but that of other things we do. But why are other things known by Sensation, but only because their Ideas come in at our Senses? For I suppose he will not say that the things themselves come in at
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our Senses; for then what need is there of Ideas at all? And if other things are therefore known by Sensation, because their Ideas come in by the Senses, then why is not God also known by Sensation, forasmuch as his Idea according to him, comes also the same way? and yet he will not allow that God's Existence is known by Sensation; Which indeed is very true, but then he should not have said that the Idea of God comes in by the Senses.

But what a strange *Adventure* is it in Philosophy to make the Idea of God to come in by our Senses, and to be derived from Sensible Objects! For besides the Difficulties and Absurdities already touch't upon, what is there in the Material World that can resemble God? Nay, what is there in the whole Creation that can represent *him* to our Thoughts? God himself cannot *make* an Idea of himself: For such an Idea, what-ever it be, must be a Creature; and can a Creature represent God! Nothing certainly but God himself can do that. He must be his own Idea, or he can have none. There is but one possible Idea of God, and that is his *Son*, the Divine λόγος,

or Ideal World, *the brightness of his Glory, and the express Image or Character of his Person.* 'Tis he that is the Idea of God; and of the whole Creation, that both *is, and represents* all things. And since the way of knowledge by our Senses turns to so poor an Account, I would desire our most Ingenious Author to consider, whether it be not abundantly more rational and intelligible (not to say pious) to suppose that we see all things in God, or the Divine Ideas, that is, in the partial Representations of the Divine Omniformity. For our Author himself confesses *pag. 315. Sect. 10.* that *Whatsoever is, is of all things, must necessarily contain in it, and actually have, at least all the Perfections that can ever after exist. Nor can it ever give to another any perfection that it has not, either actually in it self, or at least in an higher degree.* God then, even according to him, is all Beings; or, has the whole Plenitude of Being. And I wonder that this Principle had not led this Sagacious Person further. I know whither it would have carried him, if he had follow'd the Clue of it. For why should we seek any further; and puzzle

puzzle our selves with unintelligible Suppositions? What else *need,* and what else *can* be the immediate Object of our Understanding but the Divine Ideas, the *Omniform Essence* of God? This will open to us a plain intelligible Account of *Human Understanding;* yea of *Angelical and Divine* too. Here I can tell what an Idea is, *viz.* the Omniform Essence of God partially represented or exhibited, and how it comes to be united to my Mind. But as for all other ways, I look upon them to be desperate. But these things are already by me purposely discours'd of elsewhere, and are also further to be deduc'd in my *Theory of the Ideal World.*

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Having thus far reflected upon the two Principal Parts of this Work concerning *Innate Principles,* and the *Origin of Ideas,* in a continued way of Discourse, all that further remains is now to consider only some few single Passages as they stand by themselves.

Pag. 16. Sect. 3. Practical Principles must produce Conformity of Action, or else they are in vain distinguished from Speculative Maxims. 'Tis enough to di-

distinguish them from Speculative Maxims, if they are in order to Action, that is, if they are concerning such things as may and ought to be done by us, tho' in the event they do not produce any such Conformity. Otherwise a Law would not be a Law till 'tis obey'd.

Pag. 57. Sect. 15. *There is nothing like our Ideas existing in the Bodies themselves. They are in the Bodies only a Power to produce those Sensations in us.* The first part I acknowledge to be true: For certainly Heat in the Fire is no way resembling what I call Heat in my self, meaning by it either such a grateful or ungrateful Sensation as I feel, when I approach the Fire more or less. But the latter Clause I cannot approve, thinking it impossible that any Body should directly and properly produce any Sensation in my Soul. 'Tis God certainly that is the Author of all my Sensations, as well as of my Ideas. Bodies can only be Conditions or Occasional Causes of them.

Pag. 158. Sect. 10. Speaking of the Law of Vertue and Vice, says he, *If we examin it right, we shall find that the measure of what is every where call'd and esteemed*
Vertue

Vertue and Vice, is the Approbation or Dislike, Praise or Dispraise which by a secret and tacit consent establishes it self in the several Societies of Men. &c. Praise or Dispraise may be a probable Sign, or secondary Measure, but it can never be the primary Measure or Law of Vertue and Vice; whose difference must be founded upon more certain and immutable grounds of Distinction than the Praise or Dispraise of Men. For Praise or Dispraise does not *make*, but *suppose* the difference of Vertue and Vice as already settled, and antecedent to it. A thing is not good because 'tis praised, but is therefore praised because 'tis good. And how comes this Praise or Dispraise to be *establish'd by such a secret and tacit consent*, if there be not some other more certain measure of Good and Evil, according to which our Praise or Dispraise is to proceed?

Pag. 185. Sect. 5. *I doubt not but if we could trace them to their Originals, we should find in all Languages the Names which stand for things that fall not under our Senses, to have had their first rise from sensible Ideas.* Let him tell me
what

what he thinks of the Word (*Although*) Has he not a clear Conception of what is meant by that Word? And yet is there any thing of a *Material Relation* under it? I the rather instance in this Word, tho' I might instance in a thousand more, because I have read of a Man (I think the Relation is in *Dr. Cudworth's* Intellectual System) that was of our Author's Mind, that there was no Word but what ultimately stood for something material and sensible, and was convinc'd of the contrary by lighting upon the first Word of *Tully's Offices*, which is *Quanquam*.

Pag. 196. Sect. 19. *The Doctrin of the Immutability of Essences proves them only to be abstract Ideas, and is founded on the Relation that is establish'd between them and certain Sounds as signs of them.* True indeed with respect to us, who because we do not know all the Essences of things, must be supposed to make that only the Essence which we intend to signify by calling it by such a Name. But I hope notwithstanding this, the Author will allow that there are also in reality Immutable Essences of things, independent on our Conceptions

ceptions, as may appear in *Mathematical Figures*. Where the *Nominal Essence* and the *Real Essence* are all one.

Pag. 205. Sect. 9. He tells us that *Essences are only Artifices of the Understanding*. 'Tis true, those Collections of simple Ideas which we bind up together under one Name, which he elsewhere calls *Nominal Essences*, are only Creatures of the Understanding; but as I said before, there are also determinate Essences in the things themselves, tho' for the most to us unknown, which have a fix'd and immutable Nature without any dependance on any Understanding but the Divine. 'Tis true indeed, we are fain to sort and rank things by their Nominal Essences, because the Real Ones are most times unknown; but that is no Argument against the Being of real Essences. And this is by the Author himself confess'd, pag. 234. Sect. 11. where he says that *in our Ideas of substances we have not the Liberty as in mix'd modes, to frame what Combinations we think fit, to rank things by, but must follow Nature, and suit our Complex Ideas to real Existencies*. So that here we have Patterns to follow, and I desire no more. Pag.

Pag. 242. Sect. 6. *Were the signification of Body and Extension precisely the same, it would be as proper and intelligible to say the Body of an Extension, as the Extension of a Body.* Here he supposes it would be proper, to say the Extension of a Body upon that Supposition, whereas indeed were they precisely the same; neither of them would be proper.

Pag. 244. Sect. 14. *The Platonists have their Soul of the World, the Epicureans their Endeavour towards Motion, &c.* These the Author reckons among unintelligible Forms of Speech, and supposes them to be no better than *Gibberish*. As to the Soul of the World 'tis a Subject of too great a Latitude to be discours'd of at present. But as to the Epicureans *Endeavour* towards Motion, that there is such a thing, he may be sufficiently convinc'd by looking upon a pair of Scales, where tho' the lesser Weight does not actually weigh down, yet that it presses and endeavours toward it is most certain, since otherwise as much Weight would be required to weigh it down as if it
were

were quite empty. But this we do not find; whence it must of necessity be concluded that the former Weight tho' it did not pass into actual Motion, yet it did something toward it, that is, it *Endeavour'd*. The same might also be illustrated from the Actions of the Will, some of which are perfect and compleat Determinations, others only *Velleities* or *Endeavours*. But if the Author would be further satisfied in this Matter, I desire him to read the 19 and 20 Chapter of Dr. Glisson, *de Naturæ Substantiæ Energetica*, where he will find this Argument very curiously handled.

Pag. 274. Sect. 19. *The Ideas of Quantity may be set down by sensible Marks, Diagrams, &c.* But this cannot be done in Moral Ideas, we have no sensible marks that resemble them. Very true, which is a plain Argument that such Ideas are not from our Senses.

Pag. 289. Sect. 2. *Truth seems to me to signify nothing but the joyning or separating of Signs, as the things signified do Agree or Disagree one with another.* This indeed

indeed is Truth of the *Mind* or of the *Subject*, but not Truth of the *Thing* or of the *Object*, which consists not in the mind: joyning or separating either Signs or Ideas, but in the Essential Habitudes that are between the Ideas themselves. And that these are such, our Author himself implies, by saying, *as the things signified do Agree or Disagree with one another.* Here then is Agreement and Disagreement antecedently to any joyning or separating. And I very much wonder that our Author professing in the Title of the Chapter to discourse of Truth in general, and particularly of that Truth too which has been the Enquiry of so many Ages, should yet confine his Discourse to Truth of Words and Truth of Thoughts without the least mention of Objective Truth. Which indeed is the Principal Kind of Truth.

Pag. 300. Sect. 5. *I think it is a self-evident Proposition, that two Bodies cannot be in the same place.* If the Proposition be Self-evident how comes he only to *Think* 'tis so? If it were only *Evident* he must do more than so.

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Pag. 323. Sect. 14. *Eternal Truths are so not from being written in the minds of Men, Or that they were before the World: But wheresoever we can suppose such a Creature as Man is, inabled with such faculties, we must conclude he must needs when he applies his thoughts to the consideration of his Ideas, know the Truth of certain Propositions, &c.* This is a true *Aristotelian* Account of Eternal Truths. But I demand? Are these Eternal Truths in being before the Existence of Man or no? If not, how comes he to understand them when he does exist? What, does he make that to be true, which before was not so? But if they were in being before the Existence of Man, then their Eternity does not consist in their being understood by Man when ever he shall exist, but in their own fixt and immutable Relations, whereby they have an antecedent Aptness so to be understood. Which the Author himself seems to imply by saying, *He must needs so understand them.* Why must needs? But only because they are necessarily so and no otherwise intelligible. But of this I have discours'd elsewhere.

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Pag. 344. Sect. 8. He takes notice of one manifest Mistake in the Rules of Syllogism, *viz.* That *No Syllogistical reasoning can be right and Conclusive, but what has at least one general Proposition in it.* This our Author thinks to be a Mistake, and a manifest mistake. But perhaps if we rightly understand that Rule of Syllogism, there is no Mistake at all in it. All the Ground of the Dispute is from the Doubtfulness of what is meant by a general or universal Proposition. A Proposition may be said to be universal either when a Note of Universality (as *All*) is prefixed before the Subject. Or when tho that Note be not prefixed, yet the Predicate is said of the whole Subject according to the full Latitude of its Predication, so as to leave nothing of the Subject out, whereof the Predicate is not said. According to the former Sense of Universality it is not necessary that in every concluding Syllogism one Proposition be universal. But according to the latter sense of Universality (which indeed is the most proper sense of it) it is certainly necessary. And I dare challenge any

any Man to shew me one Instance of a concluding Syllogism that has not one Proposition universal in the latter Sense. For even a singular Proposition is thus universal, since being Indivisible, it can have nothing said of it, but what is said of it wholly and universally, *καθόλου*, as *Aristotle* expresses it. The Author may see a further Account of this in *Dr. Wallis* his Thesis *de Propositione singulari*, at the latter end of his *Institutio Logica*.

These, Sir, are the most considerable Passages that at once reading I thought liable to Reflection in this Work, which notwithstanding these few *Erratas*, I think to be a very extraordinary Performance, and worthy of the most publick Honour and Respect. And tho I do not approve of every particular thing in this Book, yet I must say that the Author is just such a kind of Writer as I like, one that has thought much, and well, and who freely Writes what he thinks. I hate your *Common-place* Men of all the Writers in the World, who tho they happen sometimes to say things that are in them-

themselves not only True, but considerable, yet they never write in any Train or Order of Thinking, which is one of the greatest Beauties of Composition.

But this Gentleman is a Writer of a very different Genius and Complexion of Soul, and whose Character I cannot easily give, but must leave it either to the Description of some finer Pen, or to the silent Admiration of Posterity. Only one Feature of his Disposition I am concern'd to point out, which is, that he seems to be a Person of so great Ingenuity and Candor, and of a Spirit so truly Philosophical, that I have thence great and fair Inducements to believe that he will not be offended with that Freedom I have used in these Reflections, which were not intended for the lessening his Fame, but solely for the promoting of *Truth* and *right Thinking*.

And this will justify that part of the Reflections, where agreeing with the Author in the Proposition intended to be

be proved, I lay open the insufficiency of his Proofs. For to say that a thing is false for such Reasons, when 'tis not false for such Reasons, tho' it be absolutely false, is as great an Injury to Truth, as to say a thing is false when 'tis not false. A false Inference is as much an Untruth, as a false Conclusion; and accordingly he that might reflect upon the Conclusion if false, may with as much reason, reflect upon a wrong way of inferring it, tho' the Conclusion it self be true. Which I mention with respect to the former part about Innate Principles, where tho' I agree with the Author in the thing denied, yet I think his Reasons are not cogent.

After all, notwithstanding my dissenting from this Author in so many things, I am perhaps as great an Admirer of him as any of his most sworn Followers, and would not part with his Book for half a *Vatican*. But every Writer has his Alloy, and I exempt not any Writings of my own from the like Defects. Of which perhaps, Sir, I have been convincing you all this while

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while. But that shall not trouble me, if at the same time I may be able to convince you of my Readiness to serve you at any rate, as it highly becomes,

S I R,

Your Obliged and

Humble Servant,

J. N.

P O S T -

P O S T S C R I P T.

WHereas in a certain Discourse of Mine Intituled, Considerations upon the Nature of Sin, I make Sin to be of a Positive Nature, upon better Consideration I find intolerable Consequences to follow upon that Supposition, and do therefore freely own my self to have been in a Mistake, and do here retract it under my Hand. As to the Present Discourses I know of Nothing I have to Correct, only there is One Notion which I find Occasion to enlarge and carry on further than at first I was aware of. It is in the Third Beatitude concerning the Meek's inheriting the Earth. By which I am now fully convinc'd is Principally meant that they shall possess that New Paradisiacal Earth which is to succeed the Great Conflagration, and to be the Seat of the Millennial Reign of Christ. I do not unfavourably any part of my Former Explication, only I think it defective; and add this as a further Supplement to it. For which Notion I acknowledge my self indebted to the Noble Author of the Theory of the Earth; whom the Reader may Consult for further Satisfaction in this Matter. Part 2. Chap. 5. Pag. 162.

F I N I S.