

# An Essay Concerning Human Understanding

## Book II: Ideas

John Locke

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[Brackets] enclose editorial explanations. Small ·dots· enclose material that has been added, but can be read as though it were part of the original text. Occasional •bullets, and also indenting of passages that are not quotations, are meant as aids to grasping the structure of a sentence or a thought. Every four-point ellipsis . . . . indicates the omission of a brief passage that seems to present more difficulty than it is worth. Longer omissions are reported on, between [brackets], in normal-sized type.

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## Chapter xxi: Power

1. The mind being every day informed by the senses of the alteration of the simple ideas [here = 'qualities'] that it observes in things outside it, and

- noticing how one comes to an end and another begins to exist,
- reflecting also on what passes within itself, and observing a constant change of its ideas, sometimes by the impression of outer objects on the senses and sometimes by its own choice; and
- concluding from what it has so constantly observed to have happened that similar changes will in the future be made in the same things by similar agents and in similar ways,

•considers in one thing the possibility of having any of its simple ideas changed, and in another the possibility of making that change, and •so comes by that idea that we call *power*. Thus we say that fire has a power to melt gold, and gold has a power to be melted. . . .; that the sun has a power to blanch wax, and wax a power to be blanched by the sun. . . . In all such cases the power we think of is in reference to the change of perceivable ideas, for we can't observe or conceive any alteration to be made in a thing except by observing or conceiving a change of some of its ideas.

2. Power is twofold—the ability to make a change, and the ability to be changed; one may be called *active*, the other *passive* power. [In Locke's usage, 'power' doesn't mean 'strength'; our nearest word to it is 'ability' or 'capability'; sugar's (passive) *power* to be dissolved in hot water is simply its *being able* to be thus dissolved.] God is entirely above passive power; and perhaps matter lacks all active power, so that only *created minds* have powers of both

sorts; but I shan't go into that question. My present business isn't to enquire into what things have power, but rather to explore how we come by the *idea* of it. Still, I thought it worthwhile to make the foregoing remarks, directing our minds to the thought of *God* and *minds* for the clearest idea of active powers •because otherwise that might have been lost sight of in what follows•. We shall see that active powers loom large in our complex ideas of *natural substances*, and I shall speak of such substances as having active powers, following common assumptions about them, even though they may not be such genuinely active powers as our casual thoughts are apt to represent them. That is why I have thought it worthwhile to direct our mind to God and spirits for the clearest idea of *active power*.

3. •In xii.3 I announced that the three great categories of complex ideas are those of •modes, •substances, and •relations. We are still not finished with •modes. And yet: I admit that *power* includes in it some kind of •relation—to action or to change—but then *all* our ideas turn out on close inspection to involve a relational element. ideas of extension, duration, and number all contain a secret *relation* of the parts. Shape and motion have something *relative* in them, much more obviously. As for sensible qualities such as colours and smells etc.—what are they but the powers of different bodies in *relation* to our perception? As for their basis in the things themselves, they depend on the volume, shape, texture, and motion of the parts, all of which include some kind of *relation* in them. So our idea of power, I think, •being no more relational than any of the others•, is entitled to a place among the simple ideas, and be considered as one of them, being one of the ideas that make a principal

ingredient in our complex idea of substances, as we shall see later. [Locke should have said 'a place among the simple *modes*', which he has classified as complex ideas—see xii.5.]

**4.** We are abundantly provided with the idea of passive power by almost all sorts of perceptible things. In most of them we can't help noticing that there are continual changes in their sensible qualities, and indeed a continual turn-over in the stuff they are made of; and from this we reasonably infer that they go on being liable to similar changes ·which is to attribute to them a •passive power to be thus changed·. We are at least as richly provided with examples of •active power (which is the more proper meaning of the word 'power'), because whatever change we observe, the mind must infer ·an active· power somewhere to make that change, as well as ·a passive power·, a possibility in the thing to undergo the change. But if we think about it hard we'll see that bodies don't give us through our senses as clear and distinct an idea of active power as we get from reflecting on the operations of our minds. All power relates to action, and there are just two sorts of action of which we have any idea, namely •thinking and •motion. So let us consider from where we get our clearest ideas of the powers that produce these actions. **1** Body gives us no idea of *thinking*; it is only from reflection that we have that. **2** Neither does body give us any idea of *the beginning of motion*. A motionless body doesn't give us any idea of any active power to move; and when a body is put in motion, that motion is a •passion in it rather than an •action [= 'something with respect to which it is •passive rather than •active']. For when the ball obeys the motion of a billiard cue, that isn't any action on its part but mere passion; and when it hits another ball and sets it in motion, it only communicates the motion it had received from something else and loses in itself so much as the second ball

received. This gives us only a very obscure idea of an *active power of moving* in body, because all we see the body do is to *transfer* motion, not to *produce it*. For it is a very obscure idea of *power* that doesn't stretch as far as •the production of an action, and merely takes in •the continuation of a passion. That's all that is involved in the movement of a body that is put into motion: its *continuing to move* after it has been set in motion is no more an action on its part than is its *continuing to be flat* after something has flattened it. The idea of the beginning of motion is one that we get only from reflection on what happens in ourselves, where we find by experience that merely by willing something—merely by a thought of the mind—we can move parts of our bodies that have been at rest. So it seems to me that our sensory perception of the operations of bodies gives us only a very imperfect and obscure idea of active power, since it provides no idea of the power to begin any action, whether physical or mental. If you think you have a clear idea of power from your observations of colliding bodies, I shan't quarrel with you, because sensation is one of the ways by which the mind gets its ideas. But I thought it worthwhile to consider—just in passing—whether the mind doesn't receive its idea of active power more clearly from reflection on its own operations than from any external sensation.

**5.** This at least seems to me evident:- We find in ourselves a power to begin or not begin, and to continue or end, various actions of our minds and motions of our bodies, by a mere thought or preference of the mind in which it commands (so to speak) that such and such an action be done or that it not be done. This power that the mind has to order that a given idea be thought about or that it not be thought about, or to prefer that a given part of the body move rather than stay still (or vice versa), is what we call *the will*. The actual exercise

of that power in a particular case is what we call *volition* or *willing*. If your doing x (or not doing y) results from such an order or command of the mind, your doing x (or not doing y) is called *voluntary*. And any action that is performed without such a thought of the mind is called *involuntary*. The power of perception is what we call *the understanding*. Perception, which is the act of the understanding, is of three sorts: **1** the perception of ideas in our minds; **2** the perception of the meanings of signs; **3** the perception of the connection or inconsistency, agreement or disagreement, that there is between any two of our ideas. All these are attributed to the understanding, or perceptive power, though in ordinary parlance we are said to ‘understand’ only with the latter two, not with the mere perception of ideas in our minds.

**6.** These *powers* of the mind, namely of perceiving and of preferring, are usually called two *faculties* of the mind. The word ‘faculty’ is proper enough as long as it isn’t allowed to breed confusion in men’s thoughts by being taken to stand for some real beings—some *things*—in the soul that perform those actions of understanding and volition. For when we say

the will is the commanding and superior faculty of the soul,

the will is (or is not) free,

the will determines the inferior faculties,

the will follows the dictates of the understanding,

and so on, statements like these can carry a clear and distinct sense, for anyone who attends carefully to his own ideas, and whose thoughts follow the evidence of things rather than the sound of words. But I suspect that this talk about ‘faculties’ has misled many into a confused notion of active *things* in us, . . . and that this has led to wrangling, obscurity, and uncertainty in questions relating to them.

**7.** Everyone, I think, finds in himself a power to begin or not begin, continue or put an end to, various actions in himself. From thoughts of the *extent* of this power of the mind over the actions of the man the ideas of liberty and necessity arise. These two ideas have been at the heart of an enormous amount of philosophical wrangling, encouraged by much confusion. I shall try to sort all that out in the next twenty sections. In section 28 I shall turn to other topics, though freedom will return to the spotlight in sections 47–56.

**8.** A man is *free* to the extent that he has the power to think or not, to move or not, according to the preference or direction of his own mind. (The only actions of which we have any idea boil down to thinking and moving, which is why I mention only them.) Whenever it is not equally in a man’s power to do something x or not to do it—i.e. whenever doing it is *not* the case that

- if the preference of his mind directs him to do x, he will do x, and

- if the preference of his mind directs him not to do x, he won’t do x,

he isn’t free, isn’t at liberty, is under necessity. Thus, there can’t be liberty where there is no thought, no volition, no will; but there may be thought, will, volition, where there is no liberty. Some examples make this clear.

**9.** Nobody thinks that a tennis-ball, whether moving because it has been hit or lying still on the ground, is a free agent. Why? Because we don’t think of a tennis-ball as thinking or (therefore) as having any volition, any preference of motion to rest or vice versa. Lacking volition, the ball comes under our idea of *necessary*, and that is how we describe it. Another example: a man is crossing a bridge when it collapses, pitching him into the river below; he doesn’t have liberty in this, and isn’t a free agent. He does have *volition*, and *prefers*

his not falling to his falling, but not-falling isn't within his power and so doesn't follow from his volition; and therefore in this matter he isn't free. A third example: a man strikes himself or a friend through a convulsive movement of his arm that it isn't in his power—by volition or the direction of his mind—to stop or refrain from; and nobody thinks he has liberty in this; everyone sympathizes with him, as acting by necessity and constraint.

**10.** A fourth example: a man is carried while fast asleep into a room where there is a person he has been longing to see and speak with; and he is there locked in securely; when he awakes he is glad to find himself in such desirable company, which he stays in willingly, preferring his staying to his going away. Nobody will doubt, I think, that his staying is *voluntary*; and yet it is clear that being locked in he isn't *at liberty not to stay*. So liberty is not an idea belonging to •volition or preferring [Locke's exact words], but to •the person's having the power of doing or not doing something, according to what his mind chooses or directs. idea of liberty reaches as far as *that* power and no further. The moment that power is restrained, or some compulsion removes one's ability to act or refrain from acting, liberty is extinguished.

**11.** We have examples of this—sometimes too many!—in our own bodies. A man's heart beats, and the blood circulates, and it isn't in his power by any thought or volition to stop either process; and therefore in respect to these motions he isn't a free agent. Convulsive motions agitate his legs, so that although he wills it ever so much he can't by any power of his mind stop their motion (as in that strange disease called St. Vitus's dance) but he is perpetually dancing; he isn't at liberty in this action—he *has to* move, just as does as a tennis-ball struck with a racket. On the other side, paralysis or the stocks prevent his legs from obeying the decision of

his mind when it prefers that they take his body elsewhere. In all these there is a *lack of freedom*; though the sitting still even of a paralytic, while he prefers it to a removal, is truly *voluntary*. Voluntary then is not opposed to necessary, but to involuntary. For a man may prefer what he can do to what he can't do; he may prefer the state he is in to its absence or change, even though necessity makes it unalterable.

**12.** As with the motions of the body, so with the thoughts of our minds: where any thought is such that we have power to take it up or set it aside according to the preference of the mind, there we are at liberty. A waking man being under the necessity of having some ideas constantly in his mind, is not at liberty *to think or not think*, any more than he is at liberty *to touch other bodies or not*—given that he touches the ground he stands on. But whether he turns his thoughts from one idea to another is often within his choice; and then he is as much at liberty in respect of his ideas as he is in respect of bodies he stands on; in each case he can move from one to another as he pleases. Still, just as some bodily movements are unavoidable, so some ideas are unavoidable by the mind, which can't drive them away by the utmost effort it can use. A man on the rack isn't at liberty to set aside the idea of pain and distract himself with other thoughts; and sometimes a boisterous passion hurries our thoughts along as a hurricane does our bodies, without leaving us free to think about other things that we would rather choose. But we consider the man as a free agent again as soon as •his mind regains the power to stop or continue, begin or not begin, any of these thoughts or bodily movements according as •it thinks fit to prefer either to the other.

**13.** *Necessity* occurs where thought is lacking, and where thought is present but doesn't have the power to direct

the behaviour. If an agent has thought and is capable of volition, but starts or continues some action that is contrary to the preference of his mind, that is called *compulsion*; if he stops or restricts an action when this is contrary to his volition, this is called *restraint*.

**14.** If I am right about all this, consider whether it might help to put an end to the question *Is man's will free or not?* This has been long agitated, but I think it is unreasonable because unintelligible. It follows from what I have said that the question itself is as improper and meaningless as *Is man's sleep swift or not?* and *Is man's virtue square or not?* because liberty no more applies to the will than speed does to sleep or squareness to virtue. Liberty, which is a power, belongs only to *agents*, and cannot be an attribute of the will, which is only another *power*.

**15.** It is so difficult to convey in words clear notions of internal actions that I must warn you that my words 'ordering', 'directing', 'choosing', 'preferring', etc. will not distinctly enough tell you what volition is unless you reflect on what you yourself do when you will. For example, 'preferring', though it seems perhaps best to express the act of volition, doesn't do it precisely. A man would *prefer* flying to walking, yet who can say he ever *wills* himself to fly? Clearly, volition is an act of the mind knowingly exerting that control *it takes itself to have* over any part of the man, so that we can't will ourselves to fly because we know that we can't do so. [The rest of this section repeats material from preceding sections.]

**16.** Plainly the will is simply one power or ability, and freedom is another; so that to ask whether the will has freedom is to ask whether one power has another power, whether one ability has another ability—a question too obviously and grossly absurd to argue about or to need an answer. For anyone can see that powers belong only to

agents, and are attributes only of substances, and not of powers themselves! So that the question 'Is the will free?' contains the question 'Is the will a substance, an agent?', since freedom can properly be attributed only to acting substances. If freedom can with any propriety of speech be applied to any power, it is to the power a man has to affect movements of parts of his body by his choice or preference. But his having *that* power is what entitles him to be called 'free'; indeed, that power is freedom. So now we have the question 'Is freedom free?', and if anyone asked *that*, we would conclude that he didn't know what he was talking about. It would be like someone who, knowing that 'rich' was a word to express the possession of riches, asks 'Are riches rich?'—making himself a candidate for Midas's ears!

**17.** But the absurdity is somewhat disguised—its meaning somewhat hidden—when men speak of the will as a 'faculty' and slip into thinking of it as an active substance rather than as a power, which is what it really is. As soon as it is made clear that the will is merely the power to do something, the absurdity of saying that it is or isn't free plainly reveals itself. If it were reasonable to think and talk of faculties as distinct beings that can act ('The will orders', 'The will is free'), it would also be all right to have a speaking faculty, a walking faculty, and a dancing faculty, and to think and talk of these as producing the relevant actions—'The singing faculty sings', 'The dancing faculty dances'. And when we say such things as that 'the will directs the understanding, or the understanding obeys or disobeys the will, this is no more correct and intelligible than to say that the power of speaking directs the power of singing, or the power of singing obeys or disobeys the power of speaking.

[Section **18** continues that last point, criticising the state-

ment that ‘the understanding operates on the will, or the will on the understanding’, as though a power could operate on a power.]

**19.** I grant that this or that •thought may be the occasion of a •volition, that is, of a man’s exercising the power he has to choose; and that the •choice of the mind may cause the man’s •thinking about this or that thing. (Similarly, the singing of a tune may cause the dancing of a dance, or vice versa.) But in all these cases it isn’t one power that operates on another. Rather, the mind operates and exerts these powers; it is the man that does the action, it is the agent that has power or ability. For powers are *relations*, not *agents*; and the only thing that can be free or not free is •that which *has* or *lacks* the power to operate, not •the power itself. . . .

[Section **20** continues with the theme of the misuse of the notion of a faculty. Of course the mind and the body have faculties, because that is to have powers; and they couldn’t operate if they had no power to operate. The trouble comes when faculties are treated as things, agents, rather than as powers; and Locke provides examples.]

**21.** To return now to the enquiry about liberty, I think the proper question is not *Is the will free?* but *Is a man free?* •There are two ways of taking the former question; I shall deal with one in the remainder of this section, and the other in sections 22–4. [Locke then repeats the position he has already laid out: that freedom consists in the ability to act in the manner one’s mind chooses. ‘How can we think anyone freer than to have the power to do what he will?’ He concludes:] So that in respect of actions within the reach of such a power in him, a man seems as free as it is possible for freedom to make him.

**22.** But the inquisitive mind of men who want to clear themselves of guilt as far as they can, even if that involves

putting themselves into a worse state than that of total necessity, is not content with this notion of freedom. For their purposes freedom isn’t useful unless it goes further than this. And so we find people arguing that a man isn’t free at all unless he is as *free to will* as he is *free to do what he wills*. So a further question about liberty is raised, namely *Is a man free to will?* Arguments about whether the will is free are, I think, really about this. Here is my answer to it.

[In sections **23–4** Locke presents one basic point: If at some time you have in your mind the question of whether to start walking right now, and you do have the power to start walking and also the power not to do so, you *cannot be free* with respect to the relevant act of volition. Either you will start walking or you won’t; whichever it is will be an upshot of your choosing to walk or choosing not to; so you *cannot get out of* making an act of the will settling the matter; and so your act of the will is not free. In such a case, whatever you do will be ‘unavoidably voluntary’.]

**25.** Plainly, then, a man is hardly ever at liberty whether to will or not to will. But a new question arises: *Is a man at liberty to will which of the two he pleases, motion or rest?* This question is so obviously absurd that it might suffice to convince people that the question of freedom shouldn’t be asked about the will. To ask whether a man is at liberty to will either motion or rest, speaking or silence, whichever he pleases, is to ask, whether a man can will what he wills, or be pleased with what he is pleased with. This needs no answer, I think; and those who insist on asking it must suppose that one act of will arises from another, which arises from yet another, and so on ad infinitum.

**26.** The best way to avoid such absurdities is to establish in our minds definite ideas of the things we are talking about. If the ideas of *liberty* and *volition* were well fixed in our



understandings, and if we kept them in our minds through all the questions that are raised about liberty and volition, it would be easier (I think) to resolve most of the difficulties that perplex men's thoughts and entangle their understandings; because it would be easier for us to see where the obscurity arose from •the nature of the thing under discussion and where it arose merely from •the confused meanings of some words.

**27.** *First* then, it should be borne in mind that freedom consists in the dependence on our volition ·or preference· of an action's being done *or not done*, not in the dependence on our preference ·or volition· of any action *or its contrary*.

A man standing on a cliff is at liberty to leap twenty yards downwards into the sea, not because he has a power to do the contrary action, which is •to leap twenty yards upwards (for he has no such power), but because he has a power to leap or •not to leap. . . . A prisoner in a room twenty feet square, when he is at the north side of the room, is at liberty to walk twenty feet southward because he can walk or •not walk it; but he isn't at the same time at liberty to do the contrary, i.e. to •walk twenty feet northward. Freedom, then, consists in our being able to act or not to act according as we shall choose or will. ·With that I leave the topic of freedom until I re-engage with it in section 47·.

**28.** *Secondly*, we must remember that volition or willing is an act of the mind directing its thought to the performing of some action and thereby exerting its power to produce it. In the interests of brevity I ask permission to use the word 'action' to include also refraining from action. When walking or speaking are proposed to the mind, *sitting still* and *staying silent* are mere non-actions, but they need the determination of the will as much as *walking* and *speaking*

do, and they are often as weighty in their consequences as the other two, the real actions. Those are reasons for counting such refrainings as actions too, but anyway I am doing so for brevity's sake.

**29.** Thirdly, to the question *What determines the will?* the true answer is *The mind*. The will is the general power of directing action this way or that; it is a power that the agent has; and what determines its exercise in a given case is the agent, the mind, exercising its power in some particular way. If you aren't satisfied with this answer, then you must be asking *What determines the will?* with the meaning *What moves the mind, in every particular instance, to perform the particular act of volition that it does perform?* ·This is an intelligible and respectable question, which doesn't involve treating the will as an agent or anything like that·. To this question I answer:

The motive for •continuing in the same state or action is one's *present satisfaction* in it; the motive to •change is always some *uneasiness*.

The only thing that ever leads us to will a change of state or the performing of a new action is some uneasiness ·with our present state or action·. This is the great motive that works on the mind, getting it to act. For brevity's sake I shall call this *determining the will*. I shall explain it at more length.

**30.** First, though, I must say something about terminology. Volition is a very simple act, and if you want to understand what it is you will do better by •reflecting on your own mind and observing what it does when it wills than by •any variety of verbal explanations. Yet I have tried to put it into familiar words by using the terms 'prefer' and 'choose' and their like, and these ·are not really right because they· signify *desire* as well as *volition*. . . . I find the will often confounded with. . . .desire, and one put for the other. . . . I think that this

has frequently led to obscurity and mistake in this matter, and should be avoided as much as possible. If you turn your thought inwards onto what goes on in your mind when you *will*, you'll see that the will or power of volition has to do only with actions and non-actions that the mind *takes to be in its power*. So the will is quite different from desire, which may go directly against the will in a particular case. [Locke gives two examples, this being one: A man may be suffering pain, knowing that the only way for him to relieve it would give him other, worse, physical ailments. So he *wants* the pain to go away, but he doesn't *will* any action that would make it go away.] This makes it evident that desiring and willing are two distinct acts of the mind, and thus that the will (the power of volition) is distinct from desire.

**31.** To return then to the question *What determines the will in regard to our actions?* I used to accept the widespread opinion—to which I shall return in section 35.—that what determines the will is *the greater good in view*; but I now think that what does it is some *uneasiness* that the man is at present under. That is what determines the will from moment to moment, getting us to behave as we do. This uneasiness can be called *desire*, for that's what it is: *desire is an uneasiness of the mind for the lack of some absent good*. All bodily pain of whatever kind, and all disquiet of the mind, is uneasiness; and it is always accompanied by—and indeed is hardly to be distinguished from—a desire that is equal to the pain or uneasiness that is being felt. For desire being an uneasiness in the lack of an absent good, in the case of pain the absent good is *ease*, freedom from the pain; and until ease is attained we can call the uneasiness 'desire', for nobody feels pain without wanting to be eased of it, with a desire equal in intensity to that pain. Besides this desire for ease from pain—which is essentially a desire for something

negative.—there is also desire for absent positive good; and here also the desire and uneasiness are equal. The more strongly we desire any absent good the more intensely are we in pain from not having it. But the intensity of the pain doesn't vary with how great the good is or is thought to be—only with the strength of the desire for it. Absent good can be contemplated without desire. But when there is desire there is an equally intense uneasiness.

**32.** Everyone who reflects on himself will quickly find that desire is a state of uneasiness. Everyone has felt in desire what the wise man says of hope (which isn't much different from it) 'that it being deferred makes the heart sick' [Proverbs 13:12], and that the greatness of the desire sometimes raises the uneasiness to a level where it makes people cry out 'Give me children, give me the thing desired, or I die' [Genesis 30:1]. Life itself, with all its enjoyments, is a burden that cannot be borne under the lasting and unremoved pressure of such an uneasiness.

**33.** It is true that good and evil, present and absent, work on the mind; but what *immediately* determines the will to each voluntary action is the uneasiness of desire, fixed on some absent good—whether the good be negative (such as the absence of pain) or positive (such as pleasure). I shall now try to show, by argument and from experience, that it is indeed this uneasiness that determines the will to the series of voluntary actions of which the greatest part of our lives is made up.

**34.** When a man is perfectly content with the state he is in, and thus is without uneasiness, there is nothing to move him to stop being in that state. Observe yourself and you'll see that this is right. And so we see that our All-wise Maker has put into us the uneasiness of hunger and thirst and other natural desires, which return at the proper time and

determine our wills for the preservation of ourselves and the continuation of our species. If the mere *thought* of those good ends had been sufficient to determine the will and set us to work, it is reasonable to think we would then have had none of these natural pains, and perhaps in this world little or no pain at all. 'It is better to marry than to burn', says St. Paul, [1 Corinthians 7:9] exhibiting what chiefly drives men into the enjoyments of the married state. There is more power in •the push of a little *actual* burning than •the pull of the *prospect of* greater pleasures.

**35.** It is so widely and confidently accepted that what determines the will is *good, the greater good*, that I am not surprised that I took this view for granted when I first published on this topic •in the first edition of this *Essay*•. And I suspect that many readers will blame me not for that but rather for my present retraction. But when I looked harder into the matter, I was forced to conclude that even what a person *knows to be* the greater good doesn't determine his will until his desire has been correspondingly raised and has made him uneasy in his lack of the good in question. [Locke gives the example of a poor man who agrees that affluence is better than poverty, but who isn't uneasy over his poverty and therefore doesn't bestir himself to get rich; and the example of a man who knows that virtue brings advantages, but who does nothing about it because he doesn't 'hunger and thirst after righteousness'. He writes colourfully of the alcoholic whose knowledge of what would be better for him leads him frequently to resolve to give up drinking, but doesn't lead him actually to give it up because] the uneasiness to miss his accustomed delight returns, the acknowledged greater good loses its hold, and the present *uneasiness* determines his will to start drinking again. He may at the same time make secret promises to himself that

he won't drink any more—that this is the last time he'll act against the attainment of those greater goods. And thus he is from time to time in the state of that unhappy complainer who said *Though I see and approve the better, I follow the worse*. We have constant experience of the truth of this for many people at many times; I know of no way except mine to make this fact intelligible.

**36.** Experience makes it evident that uneasiness alone operates on the will; but *why* is this so? •In answering this, I shall assume that whenever volition occurs there is some uneasiness, the question being why *it* and not something else acts immediately on the will in every case•. The answer is that at any given time only one item can determine our will, and it naturally happens that uneasiness takes that role •to the exclusion of anything else that might take it•. The reason for that is that while we are in a state of uneasiness we can't sense ourselves as being happy or on the way to happiness, because everyone finds that pain and uneasiness are inconsistent with happiness, spoiling the savour even of the good things that we do have. So our will always, as a matter of course, chooses the removing of any pain •or uneasiness• that we still have, as the first and necessary step towards happiness.

**37.** Here is another possible reason why the will is •immediately• determined only by the will •and not by the prospect of greater good. The greater good is only prospective, lying in a possible future; it isn't *present* and actual. Uneasiness is the only relevant factor that is •*present*; and it is against the nature of things that something *absent* should operate where it is not. •So a merely *future* possible good cannot operate in the actual *present*•. You may object that absent good can, through thought, be brought home to the mind and made to be present. The idea of it may indeed be

in the mind and viewed as present there; but for something that is in the mind in that way to counter-balance the removal of an uneasiness that we have, it must raise our desire to a point where the uneasiness of *that* prevails over the other uneasiness in determining the will. Until that happens, the idea in the mind of some good is there only in the way other ideas are, as merely something to think about—not operating on the will and not setting us to work. (I shall give the reason for this shortly). . . .

[In section 38 Locke writes at length about the fact of sinful conduct by people who really do believe that they are risking the loss of eternal joy in heaven. This would be inexplicable if mere unaided beliefs about the good could determine the will, because in that case *those* beliefs would surely always prevail. But their frequent failure to do so can be understood if one brings in Locke's thesis that uneasiness is what determines the will. Near the end he writes:] Any intense pain of the body, the ungovernable passion of a man violently in love, or the impatient desire for revenge, keeps the will steady and focussed; and the will that is thus determined never lets the understanding set its object aside; all the thoughts of the mind and powers of the body are uninterruptedly employed in one direction by the determination of the will, which is influenced by that towering uneasiness as long as it lasts. . . . That completes my defence of my view that uneasiness is always what immediately determines the will. The notion of uneasiness will go on working for me, but won't itself be the topic of further discussion.

**39.** Up to here my examples of uneasiness have mainly concerned desire. That kind of uneasiness is the chief determinant of desire, and the one we are most conscious of; and it seldom happens that the will orders an action without some desire being involved. (I think that is why

the will and desire are so often taken to be one and the same thing.) Still, some part in the story should be given to kinds of uneasiness that make up or at least accompany the other passions. *Aversion, fear, anger, envy, shame*, etc. each have their uneasiness too, which is how they influence the will. Each of those passions usually comes mixed with others, . . . and I think that desire is nearly always an element in the mix. I am sure that wherever there is uneasiness there is desire. Here is why: we constantly desire happiness; and to the extent that we feel uneasiness, to that extent we lack happiness and therefore desire to have it. . . . Also, the present moment is not our eternity! However greatly we are enjoying the present, we look beyond it to the future, and desire goes with that foresight, and it carries the will with it. So that even in joy, what keeps up the action on which the enjoyment depends is the *desire* to continue it and the *fear* of losing it. . . .

**40.** We are attacked by various uneasinesses, distracted by different desires, which raises the question: which of them takes precedence in determining the will to the next action? The answer is that ordinarily it is the *most pressing* of them. (That is, the most pressing of the ones that the person thinks *can* be removed; for the will can never be moved towards something it then thinks is unattainable. . . .) What ordinarily determines the will in that series of voluntary actions that makes up our lives is at each moment the most important and urgent uneasiness that we feel at that time. Don't lose sight of the fact that the proper and only object of the will is *some action of ours*, and nothing else. The only outcome we can produce by willing is an action of our own, so that is as far as our will reaches.

**41.** If it is further asked *What is it that moves desire?*, I answer: Happiness, and that alone. 'Happiness' and 'misery'

are the names of two extremes whose outer bounds we don't know. . . . But we have very lively impressions of some degrees of each, made by various instances of delight and joy on the one side, and torment and sorrow on the other. For brevity's sake I shall bring all these under the labels 'pleasure' and 'pain', because there is pleasure and pain of the mind as well as of the body. . . . Indeed, strictly speaking they are all of the mind, though some arise in the mind from thought, others in the body from certain modifications of motion.

**42.** *Happiness* then in its full extent is the utmost pleasure we are capable of, and *misery* the utmost pain. . . . Now because pleasure and pain are produced in us by the operation of certain objects on our minds or our bodies, and in different degrees, anything that is apt to produce pleasure in us we call 'good', and what is apt to produce pain we call 'bad', *just* because it is apt to produce in us the pleasure or pain that constitutes our happiness or misery. Further, even when what is apt to bring us some degree of pleasure is in itself good, and what is apt to produce some degree of pain is bad, we often don't call it so because it is in competition with a •greater of its sort. . . . If we rightly estimate what we call 'good' and 'bad', we shall find it lies to a large extent in •comparison: the cause of every lesser degree of pain, as well as every greater degree of pleasure, has the nature of good, and vice versa.

**43.** Although good is the proper object of desire in general, sometimes a man's desire remains unmoved by the prospect of good, because he doesn't regard that good as a necessary part of his happiness. Everyone constantly pursues happiness, and desires whatever contributes to it; *other* acknowledged goods a person can look at without desire, pass by, and be content to go without. There is pleasure in

knowledge, and many men are drawn to sensual pleasures. Now, let one man place his satisfaction in sensual pleasures, another in the delight of knowledge; each admits there is great pleasure in what the other pursues; yet neither makes the thing that delights the other a part of *his* happiness, and their desires are not moved that way. (As soon as the studious man's hunger and thirst make him uneasy, . . . his desire is directed towards eating and drinking, though possibly not caring much *what* food he gets to eat. And on the other side, the epicure buckles down to study when shame, or the desire to look good to his mistress, makes him uneasy in his lack of some sort of knowledge.) Thus, however intent men are in their pursuit of happiness, a man may have a clear view of good—great and acknowledged good—without being concerned for it or moved by it, if he thinks he can be happy without it. But men are always concerned about pain, which is an intense uneasiness. They can feel no uneasiness without being moved by it. And therefore whenever they are uneasy from their lack of some good that they think they need for their happiness, they start to desire it.

**44.** Something that each of us can observe in himself is this: although •the greater visible good doesn't always raise a man's desires in proportion to the greatness he acknowledges it to have, •every little trouble moves us and sets us to work to get rid of it. The nature of our happiness and misery makes it evident why this should be so. Any present pain, of whatever kind, makes a part of our present misery; but the absence of a good doesn't necessarily do so. If it always did, we would be constantly and infinitely miserable, because there are infinite degrees of happiness that we don't possess. So when we are free of all uneasiness, a moderate portion of good is enough to keep us content in the present; and a fairly

low level of pleasure in a series of ordinary enjoyments adds up to a happiness with which most of us can be satisfied. (If this were not so, there'd be no room for the obviously trivial actions that we so often exercise our wills on, voluntarily spending much of our lives on them—a pattern of conduct that couldn't persist if our will or desire were constantly directed towards the greatest apparent good.) Few people need go far afield to be convinced that this is so. In this life, indeed, most people who are happy to the extent of having a constant series of *moderate* pleasures with no admixture of uneasiness would be content to continue in •this life for ever; even though they can't deny that there *may be* a state of eternal durable joys in an •after-life, far surpassing all the good that is to be found in this one. In fact they can't avoid realizing that such a wonderful after-life is *more* possible than is their getting and keeping the pittance of honour, riches, or pleasure that they are now pursuing to the neglect of that eternal state. And yet,

•with a clear view of this difference, •satisfied of the possibility of a perfect, secure, and lasting happiness in a future state, and •quite sure that it is not to be had in this life while they limit their happiness to some little enjoyment and exclude the joys of heaven from making a necessary part of it,

*still* their desires are not moved by this greater apparent good, nor are their wills determined to any action or effort towards its attainment.

[In section 45 Locke discusses at length the phenomenon of people not being moved to seek what they believe are very great long-term goods because their wills are activated by little present uneasinesses aimed at smaller goods that they think of as necessary for their happiness. These dominant uneasinesses may be for food, drink and so on, but there

are also 'fantastical' uneasinesses directed at honour, power, riches, etc. 'and a thousand other irregular desires that custom has made natural to us'. When we are in pain, misery, uneasiness, Locke says, the first thing we need, in order to become happy, is to get out of that state; and in that situation:] the absence of absent good does not contribute to our unhappiness, and so the thought of absent good—even if we have it, and admit that the item in question *would* be good—is pushed aside to make way for the removal of the uneasinesses that we feel. This situation will change only if appropriate and repeated contemplation of an absent good •brings it nearer to our mind, •gives us a taste of that good, and •raises in us some desire. That desire then starts to contribute to our present uneasiness, and competes with our other uneasinesses in the push to be satisfied; and if it exerts enough pressure it will in its turn come to determine the will.

**46.** By thoroughly examining any proposed good, we can raise our desires to a level that is proportional to *how good* it is, and then it may come to work on the will, and be pursued. . . . wills are influenced only by the uneasinesses that are present to us; while we have any of those they are always soliciting, always ready at hand to give the will its next push. When any balancing goes on in the mind, •it isn't a balancing of prospective goods against one another; rather •it concerns only which desire will be the next to be satisfied, which uneasiness the next to be removed. So it comes about that as long as any uneasiness, any desire, remains in our mind, there is no room for good—considered just in itself as *good*—to come at the will or to have any influence on it. . . .

**47.** Despite what I have said •in section 40•, it doesn't *always* happen that the greatest and most pressing uneasiness determines the will to the next action. As we find in

our own experience, the mind is usually able to *suspend acting* on some one of its desires, and so—taking them one at a time—to suspend acting on any of them. Having done this, the mind is at liberty to consider the objects of its desires—the states of affairs that it wants to bring about—to examine them on all sides and weigh them against others. In this lies man’s liberty; and all the mistakes, errors, and faults that we run into in living our lives and pursuing happiness arise from not availing ourselves of this liberty, and instead rushing into the determination of our wills, going into action before thinking enough about what we are aiming at. ability to suspend the pursuit of this or that desire seems to me to be the source of all freedom; it is what so-called ‘free will’ consists in. When we exercise it and *then* act, we have done our duty, all that we can or ought to do in pursuit of our happiness; and it isn’t a *fault* but a *perfection* of our nature to desire, will, and act according to the last result of a fair examination.

**48.** This is so far from confining or weakening our freedom, that it is the very essence of it; it doesn’t cut short our liberty, but brings it to its proper goal; and the further we are removed from such a determination—that is, from being made to act by the judgments we have made and the uneasinesses that result from them—the nearer we are to misery and slavery. If the mind were perfectly indifferent [= ‘in perfect balance’] about how to act, not fixed by its last judgment of the good or evil that is thought to attend its choice, that would be a great imperfection in it. A man is at liberty to lift his hand to his head, or let it rest in his lap; he is perfectly indifferent as between these, and it would be an imperfection in him if he lacked that power—that is, if he were unable to lift his hand, or unable not to lift it, given that no desire of his selects one course of action rather than the

other. But it would be as great an imperfection if he had the same indifference as between lifting his hand and not lifting it in a situation where by raising it he would save himself from a blow that he sees coming. It is as much a perfection that desire (or the power of preferring) should be determined by good as that the power of acting should be determined by the will; and the more certain such determination is, the greater is the perfection. Indeed, if we were determined by anything *but* the last result of our judgments about the good or evil of an action, *we would not be free*. . . .

**49.** If we think about those superior beings above us who enjoy perfect happiness—that is, the angels in heaven—we shall have reason to judge that they are more steadily determined in their choice of good than we are; and yet we have no reason to think they are less happy or less free. And if such poor finite creatures as us were entitled to say anything about what infinite wisdom and goodness could do, I think we might say that God himself *cannot* choose what is not good; his freedom does not prevent his being determined by what is best.

**50.** Would anyone choose to be an imbecile so as to be less determined by wise thoughts than a wise man? Is it worth the name of ‘freedom’ to be at liberty to play the fool, and draw shame and misery upon oneself? Breaking loose from the conduct of reason, and lacking that restraint of examination and judgment that keeps us from choosing or doing the worse—if *that* is liberty, true liberty, then madmen and fools are the only free men! Anyone who chose to be mad for the sake of such ‘liberty’ would have to be mad already. I don’t think that anybody thinks that our liberty is restricted in a way we might complain of by the fact that we are constrained to act so as to secure the happiness that we constantly desire. God Almighty himself is under

the necessity of being happy; and the more any thinking being is under that necessity, the nearer it comes to infinite perfection and happiness. To protect us—ignorant and short-sighted creatures that we are—from mistakes about true happiness, we have been given a power to suspend any particular desire and keep it from determining the will and engaging us in action. This is •standing still when we aren't sure enough of which way to go. Examination of the possibilities is •consulting a guide. The determination of the will after enquiry is •following the direction of that guide. And someone who has a power to act or not to act, according as such determination of the will directs, is free; such determination doesn't limit the power in which liberty consists. Someone who has his chains knocked off and the prison doors opened for him is perfectly at liberty, because he can either go or stay, as he chooses, even if his preference is determined to stay because of the darkness of the night, the badness of the weather, or his lack of anywhere else to sleep. He doesn't stop being free, although his desire for some convenience gives him a preference—all things considered—for staying in his prison.

[Section **51** continues with this theme.]

**52.** The liberty of thinking beings in their constant pursuit of true happiness turns on the hinge of their ability in particular cases to

suspend this pursuit until they have looked forward in time and informed themselves about whether the particular thing they want and are considering pursuing really does lie on the way to their main end, really does make a part of the happiness that is their greatest good.

By their nature they are drawn towards happiness, and that requires them to take care not to mistake or miss it; and so

it demands that they be cautious, deliberate, and wary about how they act in pursuit of it. Whatever necessity requires us to pursue real happiness, the same necessity with the same force requires us to suspend action, to deliberate, and to look carefully at each successive desire with a view to discovering whether the satisfaction of it—rather than promoting our happiness—won't interfere with our true happiness and lead us away from it. This, it seems to me, is the great privilege of finite thinking beings; and I ask you to think hard about whether the following isn't true:

The course of men's behaviour depends on what use they make of their ability to suspend their desires and stop them from determining their wills to any action until they have examined the good and evil of the contemplated action, fairly and with as much care as its importance merits. This ability is what brings freedom into the lives of men—all the freedom they have, all they can have, all that can be useful to them. This suspension of desire, followed by deliberation, is something we *can* do, and when we have done it we have done our duty, all we can do, all we need to do.

Since the will needs knowledge to guide its choice, all we can do is to hold our wills undetermined until we have examined the good and evil of what we desire. What follows after that follows in a chain of consequences linked one to another, all depending on the last ruling of the judgment; and we have power over whether that ruling comes from a hasty and precipitate view or from a due and mature examination.

[In section **53** Locke writes about how greatly people vary in their tastes and in what they think would make them happy, and urges the importance of our exercising our *freedom* to suspend judgment and give ourselves time for further reflection and enquiry. In extreme cases one can't do this,



for example a man under torture may be unable to refrain from telling his torturers *right now* what they want to know. And 'love, anger, or any other violent passion' may have the same effect. But we should work on freeing ourselves from being dominated in that manner. He continues:] In this we should •take trouble to bring it about that whether something is to our mind's taste depends on the real intrinsic good or bad that is in it, and •not permit an admitted or supposed possible great good to slip out of our thoughts without leaving any taste of itself, any desire for it, until by adequate thought about its true worth we form an appetite in our mind that is suitable to it, and make ourselves uneasy in the lack of it or in the fear of losing it. . . . Let no-one say he *can't* govern his passions, can't prevent them from taking over and sweeping him into action; for what you can do before a prince or a great man you can do alone or in the presence of God, if you want to.

**54.** How does it come about that, although all men desire happiness, their wills carry them in such contrary directions and thus carry some of them to do bad things? What I have said makes it easy to answer this, which I do as follows. The various and contrary choices that men make show •not that they don't all pursue good but •rather that different people find different things good—that we don't all place our happiness in the same thing, or choose the same way to get it. If we were concerned only with how things go in this life, the explanation of why •one man devotes himself to study and knowledge and •another to hawking and hunting, why •one chooses luxury and debauchery and •another sobriety and riches, would not be because some of these didn't aim at their own happiness but because different things make them happy. So the physician was right in what he said to his patient who had sore eyes: 'If you get more pleasure from

the taste of wine than from the use of your sight, wine is good for you; but if the pleasure of seeing is greater to you than that of drinking, wine is bad.'

**55.** The mind has its own taste for things, as well as the palate; and you'll do no better trying to delight all men with riches or glory. . . .than trying to satisfy all men's hunger with cheese or lobsters. . . . As •pleasant tastes depend not on the things themselves but on how they suit this or that particular palate (and palates vary greatly), so also •the greatest happiness consists in having the things that produce the greatest pleasure and not having any that cause disturbance or pain. Now these, to different men, are very different things. So if men have nothing to hope for in an after-life, if *this* is the only life in which they can enjoy anything, it is neither strange nor unreasonable that they should seek their happiness by avoiding all the things that disease them here and pursuing all that delight them •here—•and it's not surprising that there should be much variety and difference among these. For if there is no prospect beyond the grave, the inference is certainly right: 'let us eat and drink,' let us enjoy what we delight in, 'for tomorrow we shall die' [Isaiah 22:13]. This, I think, may serve to show us why men pursue different ends even though the desires of all of them are bent on happiness. It can happen that men choose different things and they all choose rightly—if we suppose them •to have no prospect of an after-life, which involves supposing them• to be merely like a crowd of poor insects—some of them bees delighting in flowers and their sweetness, others beetles enjoying other kinds of food—all of them able to enjoy themselves for a season, after which they go out of existence for ever.

**56.** . . . Liberty plainly consists in a power to do or not to do, as we choose. This much is undeniable; but it seems to

cover only the actions of a man resulting from his volition, so there remains the question *Is he at liberty to will or not?* In sections 23–4 I have answered that in most cases a man isn't at liberty to refrain from the act of volition: he must exert an act of his will through which the proposed action is done or one through which it is not done. Still, in one kind of case a man is at liberty in respect of willing, namely in choosing a remote good as an end to be pursued. Here a man can suspend choosing either for or against the thing proposed until he has examined whether it really is—or really will lead to—something that will make him happy. Once he has chosen it, thereby making it a part of his happiness, it raises desire, which gives him a corresponding uneasiness, which determines his will, which sets him to work in pursuit of his choice. This shows us how a man can deserve punishment, even though in all his particular actions he *necessarily* wills what he then judges to be good. His will is always determined by whatever is judged good by his understanding, but that doesn't excuse him if *by a too hasty choice* of his own making he has adopted wrong measures of good and evil—judgments which, however false they are, have the same influence on all his future conduct as if they were true. He has spoiled his own palate, and must take responsibility for the sickness and death that follows from that. . . . What I have said may help to show us why men prefer different things and pursue happiness by contrary courses. But since men are always constant and in earnest about happiness and misery, the question still remains *How do men come to prefer the worse to the better*, and to choose what they admit has made them miserable?

[In section 57 Locke sketches an answer to his question. Some of the variation, and especially some of the conduct that isn't conducive to the happiness of the agent, is due to 1

'causes not in our power', such as extreme pain, overwhelming terror, and so on. The other source of counterproductive behaviour is 2 wrong judgment. Locke deals briefly with 1 in this section, and devotes sections 58–68 to 2.]

**58.** I shall first consider the wrong judgments men make of future good and evil, whereby their desires are misled. Nobody can be wrong about whether his present state, considered just in itself and apart from its consequences, is one of happiness or misery. Apparent and real good are in this case always the same; and so if every action of ours ended within itself and had no consequences, we would never err in our choice of good; we would always infallibly prefer the best. . . .

**59.** But our voluntary actions don't carry along with them in their present performance all the happiness and misery that depend on them. They are *prior* causes of good and evil that come to us *after* the actions themselves have passed and no longer exist. So our desires look beyond our present enjoyments, and carry the mind forward to any absent good that we think is needed to create or increase our happiness. The absent good gets its attraction from the belief that it is needed for happiness. Without that belief we are not moved by absent good. In this life we are accustomed to having a narrow range, in which we enjoy only one pleasure at a time; and when we have such a single pleasure and have no uneasiness, the pleasure is enough to make us think we are happy; and we aren't affected by all remote good, even when we are aware of it. Because our present enjoyment and freedom from pain suffices to make us happy, we don't want to risk making any change. . . . But as soon as any new uneasiness comes in, our happiness is disturbed and we are set to work again in the pursuit of happiness.

**60.** One common reason why men often are not raised to the desire for the greatest absent good is their tendency to think they can be happy without it. While they think *that*, the joys of a future state don't move them; they have little concern or uneasiness; and the will, free from the determination of such desires for distant-future goods, is left to pursue nearer satisfactions, removing those uneasinesses that it feels from its lack of them and its longing for them. [The remainder of this section develops this line of thought, applying it especially to those who ignore the prospects of the after-life in their pursuit of relatively trivial earthly pursuits. The section concludes:] For someone who—unlike a bee or a beetle—has a prospect of the different state that awaits all men after this life, a state of perfect happiness or of misery depending on their behaviour here, the measures of good and evil that govern his choice are utterly changed. For no pleasure or pain in this life can be remotely comparable to the endless happiness or intense misery of an immortal soul in the after-life, so his choices about how to act will depend not on the passing pleasure or pain that accompanies or follows them here but on whether they serve to secure that perfect durable happiness hereafter.

**61.** To understand in more detail the way men often bring misery on themselves, although they all earnestly pursue happiness, we must consider how things come to be misrepresented to our desires. That is done by the faculty of judgment telling untruths about them. To see what causes wrong judgments, and what their scope is, we must note that things are judged good or bad in a double sense. In the strict and proper sense, only pleasure is good, only pain bad. But things that draw pleasure and pain after them are also considered as good and bad, because our desires—those of any creature with foresight—aim not only at present pleasure

and pain but also at whatever is apt to cause pleasure or pain for us at a later time.

**62.** The wrong judgment that often misleads us and makes the will choose the worse option lies in misreporting the various comparisons of these consequences that I have just mentioned. I am not talking about one person's opinion about someone else's choices, but of the choices a man makes that he himself eventually admits were wrong. Now, it is certain that every thinking being seeks happiness, which consists in the enjoyment of pleasure without much uneasiness mixed into it; and it is impossible that anyone should willingly slip something nasty into his own drink, or leave out anything in his power that would help to complete his happiness—impossible, that is, unless he has made a wrong judgment. . . . Such judgments are of two kinds: **1** about the relative goodness or badness of items considered just in themselves, and **2** about what the consequences will be of various items. I'll discuss **1** in sections 63–5, and **2** in sections 66–7. Yet another kind of judgment will be discussed in section 68.

**63.** When we compare *present* pleasure or pain with *future* (which is usually the case in most important questions about what to do), we often make wrong judgments about them, measuring them differently because of our different temporal distances from them. Nearby objects are apt to be thought to be bigger than ones that are actually bigger but are further away; and so it is with pleasures and pains, with which *the present* is apt to win the contest. Thus most men, like spendthrift heirs, are apt to judge a little in hand to be better than a great deal to come. But everyone must agree—whatever his values are—that this is a wrong judgment. That which is future will certainly come to be present, and then, having the same advantage of nearness, will show itself in

its full size, revealing the mistake of someone who judged it by unequal measures. [In the remainder of the section Locke develops this point at some length, with special reference to the drinker who knows he'll have a hangover in the morning.]

**64.** It is because of the weak and narrow constitution of our minds that we judge wrongly when comparing present pleasure or pain with future. We can't thoroughly enjoy two pleasures at once, much less enjoy a pleasure—with a few exceptions—while pain possesses us. A present pleasure, if it isn't feeble to the point of hardly being a pleasure, fills our narrow souls, taking up the whole mind so as to leave hardly any room for thoughts of absent things. Even if among our pleasures there are some that aren't strong enough to exclude thoughts about things in the future, we so intensely hate pain that a little of it extinguishes all our pleasures. So we come to desire to be rid of the present evil, whatever the cost; we are apt to think that nothing absent can equal it, because in our present pain we find ourselves incapable of any degree of happiness. . . . Nothing, we passionately think, can exceed—hardly anything can *equal*—the uneasiness that now sits so heavily on us. And *not* having a present pleasure that is available is a pain, often a very great one, with one's desire being inflamed by a near and tempting object. So it is no wonder that *that* operates in the same way that pain does, lessens future goods in our thoughts, and so forces us blindfold (so to speak) into the embraces of the nearby pleasure.

[In section **65** Locke makes the point that in our judgments about possible future pleasure 'of a sort we are unacquainted with' we are apt, if that pleasure is in competition with something that is closer in time, to underestimate the former on the ground that if we actually had it we would find that it didn't live up to its billing. He continues:] But this way

of thinking is wrong when applied to the happiness of the after-life. . . . For that life is intended by God to be a state of happiness, so it must certainly be agreeable to everyone's wish and desire. . . . The manna in heaven will suit everyone's palate. . . .

**66.** When there is a question of some action's being good or bad in its consequences, we have two ways of judging wrongly. **1** We may underestimate *how* bad a given bad consequence would be. **2** We may underestimate the probability that a given bad upshot *will* be a consequence of the proposed action—allowing ourselves to believe wrongly that the threatened consequence may somehow be avoided, e.g. by hard work, skill, nimbleness, change of character, repentance, etc. I could show, case by case, that these are wrong ways of judging; but I shall merely offer the following general point. It is very wrong and irrational to risk losing a greater good in order to get a lesser one on the basis of uncertain guesses and before the matter has been examined as thoroughly as its importance demands. Everyone must agree with this, I think, especially if he considers the usual causes of this wrong judgment, of which I now describe three.

**67.** One is ignorance. Someone who judges without informing himself as fully as he can is guilty of judging amiss. The second is carelessness, when a man overlooks things that he *does* know. This is a sort of self-induced temporary ignorance, which misleads our judgments as much as the other. Judging is like balancing an account to see whether there is profit or loss; so if either column is added up in a rush, resulting in the omission of some figures that ought to be included, this haste causes as wrong a judgment as if it were perfect ignorance. What usually causes it is the domination by some present pleasure or pain. understanding and

reason were given us so that we won't rush in, but instead will search and see and *then* judge. Understanding without liberty would be useless, and liberty without understanding (if there could be such a thing) would signify nothing. If a man sees what would do him good or harm, make him happy or miserable, without being able to move one step towards or from it, what good is it to him that he sees it? And if someone is at liberty to ramble in perfect darkness, how is his liberty any better than if he were driven up and down as a bubble by the force of the wind? Being acted on by a blind impulse from •within oneself is no better than being acted on by one from •outside. So the first great use of liberty is to hinder blind headlong rushing; the principal exercise of freedom is to stand still, open the eyes, look around, and take a view of the consequences of what we are going to do—doing all this with as much thoroughness as the weight of the matter requires. I shan't here explore this matter further. . . . I shall consider only one other kind of false judgment, which I think I ought to mention because it has great influence though it may usually be overlooked.

**68.** All men desire happiness, that's past doubt; but when they are rid of pain they are apt to settle for any pleasure that is readily available or that they have grown to be fond of, and to be satisfied with that, and thus to be happy until some new desire disturbs that happiness and shows them that they are not happy. Some goods exclude others; we can't have them all; so we don't fix our desires on every apparent greater good unless we judge it to be necessary to our happiness; if we *think we can be happy without it*, it doesn't move us. This brings up a third way in which men judge wrongly, namely by thinking something not to be necessary to their happiness when really it is so. This can mislead us •in our choice of goods to aim at and •in the

means we adopt to achieve a good. We are encouraged to think that some good would not contribute to our happiness by the real or supposed unpleasantness of the actions needed to achieve it, for we tend to find it so absurd that we should *make ourselves unhappy* in order to *achieve happiness* that we don't easily bring ourselves to it.

**69.** We now come to a fourth and final kind of error—not exactly an error of *judgment*—that men can make in their approach to issues concerning goods and happiness. Before presenting it, we need to grasp a background fact. It is evident that in many cases a man has it in his power to change the pleasantness and unpleasantness that accompanies a given sort of action. It's a mistake to think that men can't come to take pleasure in something they used to dislike or regard with indifference. In some cases they can do it just by careful thinking; in most cases they can do it by practice, application, and habit. Bread or tobacco may be neglected even when they are shown to be useful to health, because of an indifference or dislike for them. But thought about the matter recommends that they be tried, and if they are tried the person finds that they are pleasant after all, or else through frequent use they *become* pleasant to him. This holds in the case of virtue also. Actions are pleasing or displeasing, either in themselves or considered as a means to a greater and more desirable end. [Locke makes the point that •careful thought about the good to be attained may make one *reconciled to the unpleasantness* of the means to it, whereas •'use and practice' can lead one to *enjoy* those means, finding them pleasant after all.] Habits have powerful charms. They put so much easiness and pleasure into what we accustom ourselves to doing that we can't give it up without uneasiness. Though this •fact about human nature• is very visible, and everyone's experience

displays it to him, it is much neglected as a help to men in their achievement of happiness. So neglected, indeed, that many people will think it paradoxical to say—as I do—that men can make things or actions more or less pleasing to themselves, and in that way remedy something that is responsible for great deal of their wandering. . . .

**70.** I shan't go on about how men mislead themselves by wrong judgments and neglect of what is in their power. That would make a volume, and it isn't my business. But there is one point about it that I shall present here because it is so important. If someone is so unreasonable as to fail to think hard about *infinite* happiness and misery, he isn't using his understanding as he should. The rewards and punishments of the after-life that the Almighty has established as the enforcements of his law have enough weight to determine the choice, against *whatever* pleasure or pain this life can show. For this to be so, the eternal state has only to be regarded as a bare *possibility*, and nobody could question that. Exquisite and endless happiness is a possible consequence of a good life here, and the contrary state the possible reward of a bad one; and someone who accepts this must admit that his judgment is wrong if he doesn't conclude that a virtuous life (which may bring the certain expectation of everlasting bliss) is to be preferred to a vicious one (with the fear of that dreadful state of misery that may overtake the guilty, or at best the terrible uncertain hope of annihilation). This would obviously hold good even if the virtuous life here had nothing but pain, and the vicious one brought continual pleasure; which in fact is far from the case. . . . The worst that comes to the pious man if he is *wrong* is that there is no after-life, which is the best that the wicked man can get if he is *right*. With possible infinite happiness on the virtue side of the balance and possible infinite misery on the vice side, it

would be *madness* to choose the latter. . . . If the good man is right, he will be eternally happy; if he is wrong, he won't be miserable—he won't feel anything. On the other side, if the wicked man is right, he won't be happy (he won't feel anything); if he is wrong, he'll be infinitely miserable. . . . I have said nothing about the certainty or *probability* of a future state, because I have wanted to show the wrong judgment that anyone must admit that he is making—*on his own principles*—if he prefers the short pleasures of a vicious life while he is certain that an after-life is at least *possible*.

**71.** . . . In correcting a slip that I had made in the first edition of this work, I was led to my present view about human liberty which I now repeat, before arguing against a rival view that I didn't mention earlier.

*Liberty* is a power to act or not act according as the mind directs. A power to direct the operative faculties to motion or rest in particular instances is *the will*. What determines the will to any change of operation is some present *uneasiness*, which is—or at least is always accompanied by—*desire*. Desire is always moved to avoid evil, because a total freedom from pain is always a necessary part of our happiness. But a prospective greater good may fail to move desire, because it doesn't make a necessary part of the person's happiness or because he thinks it doesn't. All that we ever desire is to be happy. But although this general desire of happiness operates constantly and invariably, the satisfaction of any particular desire can be suspended from determining the will until we have maturely examined whether the apparent good in question really does make a part of our real happiness. What we judge as a result of that examination is what ultimately determines us. A man couldn't be free if

•his will were determined by anything other than •his own desire, guided by •his own judgment.

I know that some people equate a man's liberty with his being, before his will is determined, *indifferent*—that is, able to go either way. I wish those who lay so much stress on this supposed indifference had told us plainly whether it comes •before the thought and judgment of the understanding as well as •before the decree of the will. It may seem that they have to say that it does. For it is pretty hard to place the indifference between them, that is, immediately *after* the judgment of the understanding and *before* the determination of the will; because the determination of the will *immediately* follows the judgment of the understanding. On the other hand, to equate liberty with an indifference that *precedes* the thought and judgment of the understanding places it in such darkness that we can neither see nor say anything of it. At any rate, it gives 'liberty' to something that isn't capable of having it, because we all agree that no agent is capable of liberty except as a *consequence* of thought and judgment. If liberty is to consist in indifference, then, it must be an indifference that remains after the judgment of the understanding and indeed after the determination of the will •because, as we have seen, it cannot occur before both, and cannot come between them either. That, however, isn't •an indifference of *the man*. He has judged whether it is best to act or not to act •and has decided or chosen accordingly, so *he* isn't now indifferent. Rather, it is •an indifference of his operative powers: they are equally able to operate and to refrain from operating now, *after* the will's decree, just as they were *before* it; if you want to call this 'indifference', do so! This indifference gives a man a kind of freedom: for example, I have the ability to move my hand or to let it rest; that operative power is 'indifferent' as between moving and not moving; I am then in that respect perfectly free.

My will determines that operative power to keep my hand still; but I am free, because my operative power remains indifferent as between moving and not moving; my will has ordered the keeping-still of my hand, but the *power to move it* hasn't been lost or even lessened; *that power's* indifference as between moving and not moving is just as it was before the will commanded, as can be seen if the will puts it to the trial by ordering that my hand move. It would be otherwise if my hand were suddenly paralysed, or (on the other side) if it were set moving by a convulsion; in those cases, the indifference of the operative faculty is lost. That is the only sort of indifference that has anything to do with liberty.

[Section **72** opens with Locke saying that he has spent so long on liberty because of the topic's importance. He also reports that the view about liberty that he presented in the first edition came to seem to him wrong, and expresses some pride in his willingness to admit to his errors and to correct them. In the remainder of the section he returns to something he said in section 4, namely that when bodies move their movement is given to them by other bodies, so that this is *passive* rather than *active* power. He now remarks that many mental events exhibit passive rather than active power, for example when the mind acquires an idea 'from the operation of an external substance'. He concludes:] This reflection may be of some use to preserve us from mistakes about powers and actions that we can be led into by grammar and the common structure of languages—the point being that grammatically 'active' verbs don't always signify action. When for example I *see* the moon or *feel* the heat of the sun, the verbs are active but what they report is no action by me but only the passive reception of ideas from external bodies. On the other hand, when I *turn* my eyes another way, or *move* my body out of the sunbeams, I

am genuinely active, because I put myself into that motion of my own choice, by a power within myself. Such an action is the product of active power.

**73.** So now I have presented in compact form [chapters ii-xxi] a view of our original [here = 'basic'] ideas, out of which all the rest are made up. I believe that hard philosophical work would show that all our ideas come down to these very few primary and original ones:

extension

solidity

mobility, or the power of being moved.

We get these ideas from bodies, through our senses. Also (coining two new words, which I think will be useful):

perceptivity, or the power of perception or thinking

motivity, or the power of moving.

We get these from our own minds, through reflection. When we add

existence

duration

number

which come to us through sensation and reflection, we may have completed the list of original ideas on which the rest depend. For I think that these would suffice to explain the nature of colours, sounds, tastes, smells, and all our other ideas, if only we had faculties acute enough to perceive the textures and movements of the minute bodies that produce in us those sensations ·of colour, taste, and so on·. But it is no part of my purpose in this book to investigate scientifically the textures and structures of bodies through which they have the power to produce in us the ideas of their sensible qualities. For my purposes it is enough to note that gold or saffron has a power to produce in us the idea of yellow, and snow or milk the idea of white, which we can only have by our sight; I needn't explore the physics of what gives them those powers.·: when we go beyond the bare ideas in our minds and start to think about their causes, we can't conceive anything in a sensible object through which it could produce different ideas in us except the sizes, shapes, numbers, textures, and motions of its imperceptible parts.

## Chapter xxii: Mixed modes

**1.** In the foregoing chapters ·xiii-xxi· I have discussed *simple modes*, showing through examples of some of the most important of them what they are and how we come by them. Now I am ready to consider the ideas that we call *mixed modes*. Examples are the complex ideas of *obligation*, *drunkenness*, a *lie*, etc., which I call mixed modes because

they consist of combinations of simple ideas of different kinds, unlike the more simple modes, which consist of simple ideas all of the same kind. These mixed modes are distinguished from the complex ideas of *substances* by the fact that they are not looked upon to be typical marks of any real beings that have a steady existence, and are only



scattered and independent ideas put together by the mind.

**2.** Experience shows us that the mind gets its simple ideas in a wholly passive manner, receiving them all from the existence and operations of things presented to us by sensation and reflection; we can't make such an idea for ourselves. But mixed modes—our present topic—are quite different in their origin. The mind often exercises an active power in making these several combinations: once it has some simple ideas, it can assemble them into various complexes, thus making a variety of complex ideas, without examining whether they exist together in that way in nature. I think that is why these ideas are called *notions*, implying that they have their origin and their constant existence more in the thoughts of men than in the reality of things. To form such ideas it sufficed that the mind puts the parts of them together, and that they were consistent in the understanding, without considering whether they had any real being; though I don't deny that some of them might be taken from observation. The man who first formed the idea of *hypocrisy* might either have •taken it at first from observing someone who made a show of good qualities that he didn't really have, or else have •formed that idea in his mind without having any such pattern to fashion it by. ·There must be cases of the latter sort·. For it is evident that in the beginning of languages and societies of men, some of their complex ideas. . . . must have been in men's minds before they existed anywhere else; and that many names standing for such complex ideas were in use before the combinations they stood for ever existed.

**3.** Now that we have languages that abound with words standing for such combinations, one common way of acquiring these complex ideas is through *explanations* of ·the meanings of· the terms that stand for them. Because such an idea consists of a number of simple ideas combined,

the words standing for those simple ideas can be used to explain what the complex one is. This procedure requires only that the pupil understand those names for simple ideas; he needn't ever have encountered this particular combination of them in the real world. In this way a man can come to have the idea of *sacrilege* or *murder* without ever seeing either of them committed.

**4.** What gives a mixed mode its unity? How do precisely *these* simple ideas come to make a single complex idea? In some cases the combination doesn't exist in nature, so *that* can't be the source of the idea's unity. I answer that the idea gets its unity from *the mind's act* of combining those simple ideas and considering them as one complex idea of which those are the parts; and the giving of a name to the complex idea is generally viewed as the final stage in the process of combination. For men seldom think of any collection of simple ideas as making one complex one unless they have a name for it. Thus, though *the killing of an old man* is as fit in nature to be united into one complex idea as *the killing of one's father*, because the former has no name (comparable with 'parricide' for the latter) it isn't taken for a particular complex idea. . . .

**5.** Of all the combinations of simple ideas that are, in the nature of things, fit to be brought together into complex ideas, men select some for that treatment and neglect others. Why? The answer lies in the purposes for which men have language. The purpose of language is for men to show their thoughts, or to communicate them to one another, as quickly as possible; so men usually make *and name* the complex modes for which they have frequent use in everyday life and conversation; and ones that they seldom have occasion to mention they leave loose, without names to tie them together. When they *do* need to speak of one of these combinations,

they can do so through the names of their constituent simple ideas. The alternative is to trouble their memories with the burden of too many complex ideas that they seldom or never have any occasion to make use of.

[In sections 6–7 Locke gets two explanations out of his view that complex-idea words are coined when *needed*. It explains, he says in section 6, why every culture has words that aren't strictly translatable into the language of others; and (in section 7) why within a single language the meanings of words constantly change. He then returns to his main theme:] If you want to see how many different ideas are in this way wrapped up in one short sound, and how much of our time and breath is thereby saved, try to list all the ·simple· ideas that are involved in the meaning of 'reprieve' or 'appeal'!

**8.** Mixed modes are fleeting and transient combinations of simple ideas; they have a short existence everywhere except in the minds of men, and even there they exist only while they are thought of; their greatest permanency is in their *names*, which are therefore apt to be taken for the ideas themselves. If we ask where the idea of a *triumph*. . . exists, it is evident this collection of ideas could not exist all together anywhere in the thing itself, for a triumph is an action that stretches through time, so that its constituents could never all exist together. [Locke is using 'triumph' in its sense of 'victory parade'.] This will be dealt with more extensively when I come to treat of words and their use ·in Book III·, but I couldn't avoid saying this much at the present stage.

**9.** So there are three ways in which one can acquire a complex idea of a mixed mode. •By experience and observation of things themselves: by seeing men wrestle, we get the idea of *wrestling*. •By invention, putting together several simple ideas in our own minds: he that first invented *printing* had

an idea of it in his mind before it ever existed. The most usual way, •by explaining the names of actions we never saw or notions we can't see, enumerating all the ideas that are their constituent parts. . . . All our complex ideas are ultimately resolvable into simple ideas out of which they are built up, though their immediate ingredients (so to speak) may also be complex ideas. The mixed mode that the word 'lie' stands for is made of these simple ideas:

- Articulate sounds.
- Certain ideas in the mind of the speaker.
- Those words the signs of those ideas.
- Those signs put together by affirmation or negation, otherwise than the ideas they stand for are ·related· in the mind of the speaker.

I don't think I need to go any further in the analysis of that complex idea we call a *lie*. What I have said is enough to show that it is made up of simple ideas, and it would be tedious to enumerate every particular simple idea that goes into this complex one. . . . All our complex ideas. . . can ultimately be resolved ·or analysed· into simple ideas, which are the only materials of knowledge or thought that we have or can have. There is no reason to fear that this restricts the mind to too scanty a supply of ideas: think what an inexhaustible stock of •simple modes we get from *number* and *shape* alone! So we can easily imagine how far from scanty our supply of •mixed modes is, since they are made from the various combinations of different simple ideas and of their infinite modes. . . .

**10.** The simple ideas that have been most modified, and had most mixed ideas (with corresponding names) made out of them are these three: *thinking* and *motion* (which cover all action) and *power* (from which these actions are thought to flow). Action is the great business of mankind, and the

whole subject-matter of all laws; so it is no wonder that all sorts of modes of thinking and motion should be attended to, their ideas observed and laid up in the memory, and names assigned to them. Without all this, laws could not be well made, or vice and disorders repressed. Nor could men communicate well with one another if they didn't have such complex ideas with names attached to them. So men have equipped themselves with settled names, and supposedly settled ideas in their minds, of kinds of •actions distinguished by their causes, means, objects, ends, instruments, time, place, and other circumstances, and also of their •powers to perform those actions. For example, *boldness* is the •power to speak or do what we want, publicly, without fear or disorder. . . . When a man has acquired a power or ability to do something through doing it frequently, we call that a 'habit'; when he has a power that he is ready to exercise at the drop of a hat, we call it a 'disposition'. Thus •for example •*testiness* is a disposition or aptness to be angry. Summing up: Let us examine any modes of action, for example

- consideration and assent, which are actions of the mind,
- running and speaking, which are actions of the body,
- revenge and murder, which are actions of both together;

and we shall find them to be merely collections of simple ideas that together make up the complex ideas signified by those names.

**11.** Power is the source of all action; and the substances that *have* the powers, when they exert a power to produce

an act, are called *causes*; and what comes about by the exerting of that power—a substance that is produced, or simple ideas [here = 'qualities'] that are introduced into any subject—are called *effects*. The efficacy through which the new substance or idea is produced is called *action* in the subject that exerts the power, and *passion* in the subject in which any simple idea is changed or produced. Although this efficacy takes many forms, I think that in thinking beings it is conceivable only as modes of •thinking and •willing, and in bodies only as modifications of •motion. If there is any kind of action other than these, I have no notion or idea of it; and so it is far from my thoughts, apprehensions, and knowledge, and I am as much in the dark about it as I am about five extra senses or as a blind man is about colours. Many words that *seem* to express some action, really signify nothing of the action—nothing of the *how* of it—but merely the effect together with some facts about •the thing that causes or •the thing upon which the cause operates. Thus, for example, *creation* and *annihilation* contain in them no idea of the action or how it is produced, but merely of the cause and the thing done. Similarly, when a peasant says 'Cold freezes water', although the word 'freeze' seems to import some •specific kind of •action, all it really means •in the mouth of the peasant •is that water that was fluid has become hard, implying no idea of the action through which this is done.

[In section **12** Locke remarks that his purpose has been to show how words with complex meanings can be defined, not actually to define them all.]

## Chapter xxiii: Complex ideas of substances

1. The mind is supplied with many simple ideas, which come to it through the senses from outer things or through reflection on its own activities. Sometimes it notices that a certain number of these simple ideas go constantly together, and it presumes them to belong to *one thing*; and—because words are suited to ordinary ways of thinking and are used for speed and convenience—those ideas when united in one subject are called by *one name*. Then we carelessly talk as though we had here one simple idea, though really it is a complication of many ideas together. What has happened in such a case is that, because we can't imagine how these simple ideas could exist by themselves, we have acquired the habit of assuming that they exist in (and result from) some substratum, which we call *substance*. ['Substratum' = 'what underlies' = something that serves as the *basis* or *foundation* of something else.]

2. So that if you examine your notion of *pure substance in general*, you'll find that your only idea of it is a supposition of *an unknown support of qualities* that are able to cause simple ideas in us—qualities that are commonly called 'accidents'. If anyone were asked 'What is the subject in which colour or weight inheres?', he would have to reply 'In the solid extended parts'; and if he were asked 'What does that solidity and extension inhere in?', he wouldn't be in a much better position than the Indian philosopher who said that the world was supported by a great elephant, and when asked what the elephant rested on answered 'A great tortoise'. Being further pressed to know what supported the broad-backed tortoise, he replied that it was *something he knew not what*. So too here, as in all cases where we use words without having clear and distinct ideas, we talk like children who, being

asked 'What's *this*?' about something they don't recognize, cheerfully answer 'It's a *thing*'. Really all this means, when said by either children or adults, is that they don't know what it is, and that 'the thing' they purport to know and talk about isn't something of which they have any distinct idea at all—they are indeed perfectly in the dark about it. So the idea of ours to which we give the general name 'substance', being nothing but the supposed but unknown support of those qualities we find existing and which we imagine can't exist '*sine re substantive*'—that is, without some thing to support them—we call that support *substantia*; which, according to the true meaning of the word, is in plain English *standing under* or upholding. ['Sub' is Latin for 'under', and 'stans' is Latin for 'standing'; so 'substans' (English 'substance') literally means something that stands under something.]

3. In this way we form an obscure and relative idea of substance in general. It is *relative* because it isn't an idea of what substance is like in itself, but only an idea of how it •relates to something else, namely the qualities that it •upholds or stands under. From this we move on to having ideas of various sorts of substances, which we form by collecting combinations of simple ideas that we find in our experience tend to go together and which we therefore suppose to flow from the particular internal constitution or unknown essence of a substance. Thus we come to have the ideas of a *man, horse, gold, water*, etc. If you look into yourself, you'll find that your only clear idea of these sorts of substances is the idea of certain simple ideas existing together. It is the combination of ordinary qualities observable in *iron*, or a *diamond*, that makes the true complex idea of those kinds of substances—kinds that a smith or a jeweller commonly

knows better than a philosopher does. Whatever technical use he may make of the term 'substance', the philosopher or scientist has no idea of *iron* or *diamond* except what is provided by a collection of the simple ideas that are to be found in them—with •one further ingredient. complex ideas of substances are made up of those simple ideas plus •the confused idea of some *thing* to which they belong and in which they exist. So when we speak of any sort of substance, we say it is a thing having such or such qualities: body is a thing that is extended, shaped, and capable of motion; •spirit, a thing that can think; and we say that hardness and power to attract iron are qualities to be found *in* a loadstone, •conceived of as a *thing* containing these qualities. [Loadstone is a kind of rock that is naturally magnetic.] These and similar ways of speaking show that the substance is always thought of as some thing in addition to the extension, shape, solidity, motion, thinking, or other observable ideas, though we don't know what it is. [Locke uses •'spirit', as he does 'soul', to mean merely 'thing that thinks' or 'thing that has mental properties'. It doesn't mean something *spiritual* in any current sense of the term.]

**4.** So when we talk or think of any particular sort of corporeal substances—e.g. horse, stone, etc.—although our idea of it is nothing but the collection of simple ideas of qualities that we usually find united in the thing called 'horse' or 'stone', still we think of these qualities as existing in and supported by some common subject; and we give this support the name 'substance', though we have no clear or distinct idea of what it is. We are led to think in this way because we can't conceive how qualities could exist unsupported or with only one another for support.

**5.** The same thing happens concerning the operations of the mind—thinking, reasoning, fearing, etc. These can't exist by themselves, we think, nor can we see how they could belong

to body or be produced by it; so we are apt to think that they are the actions of some other substance, which we call 'spirit'. We have as clear a notion of the substance of •spirit as we have of •body. The latter is supposed (without knowing what it is) to be •the substratum of those simple ideas that come to us from the outside, and the former is supposed (still not knowing what it is) to be •the substratum of the mental operations we experience within ourselves. Clearly, then, we have as poor a grasp of the idea of bodily substance as we have of spiritual substance or spirit. So we shouldn't infer that there is no such thing as spirit because we have no notion of the substance of spirit, any more than we should conclude that there is no such thing as body because we have no clear and distinct idea of the substance of matter.

**6.** Whatever the secret, abstract nature of substance in general may be, therefore, all our ideas of particular sorts of substances are nothing but combinations of simple ideas co-existing in some unknown cause of their union. We represent particular sorts of substances to ourselves through such combinations of simple ideas, and in no other way. They are the only ideas we have of the various sorts of things—the sorts that we signify to other people by means of such names as 'man', 'horse', 'sun', 'water', 'iron'. Anyone who hears such a word, and understands the language, forms in his mind a combination of those simple ideas that he has found—or thinks he has found—to exist together under that name; all of which he supposes to rest in and be fixed to that unknown common subject that doesn't inhere in anything else in its turn. Consider for instance the idea of the sun: it is merely a collection of the simple ideas, bright, hot, roundish, having a constant regular motion, at a certain distance from us—and perhaps a few others, depending on how accurately the owner of the idea has observed the

properties of the sun.

**7.** The most perfect idea of any particular sort of substance results from putting together most of the simple ideas that do exist in it—i.e. in substances of that sort—including its active powers and passive capacities. (These are not simple ideas, but for brevity's sake let us here pretend that they are.) Thus the complex idea of the substance that we call *a loadstone* has as a part *the power of attracting iron*; and *a power to be attracted by a loadstone* is a part of the complex idea we call 'iron'. These *powers* are counted as inherent *qualities* of the things that have them. Every substance is as likely, through the powers we observe in it, (a) to change the perceptible qualities of other subjects as (b) to produce in us those simple ideas that we receive *immediately* from it. When (b) happens with fire (say), our senses perceive in fire its heat and colour, which are really only the fire's powers to produce those ideas in us. When (a) happens, we also learn about the fire because it acts on us *mediately* [= 'through an intermediary'] by turning wood into charcoal and thereby altering how *the wood* affects our senses. . . . In what follows, I shall sometimes include these powers among the simple ideas that we gather together in our minds when we think of particular substances. Of course they aren't really *simple*; but they are *simpler* than the complex ideas of kinds of substance, of which they are merely parts.

**8.** It isn't surprising that powers loom large in our complex ideas of substances. We mostly distinguish substances one from another through their secondary qualities, which make a large part of our complex ideas of substances. (Our senses will not let us learn the sizes, textures, and shapes of the minute parts of bodies on which their real constitutions and differences depend; so we are thrown back on using their secondary qualities as bases for distinguishing them one

from another.) And all the secondary qualities, as has been shown in viii, are nothing but powers. . . .

**9.** The ideas that make our complex ideas of bodily substances are of three sorts. First, the ideas of the *primary qualities* of things, including the size, shape, number, position, and motion of the parts of bodies. We discover these by our senses, but they are in the bodies even when we don't perceive them. Secondly, the sensible [= 'perceptible'] *secondary qualities*. They depend on the primary qualities, and are nothing but the powers that bodies have to produce certain ideas in us through our senses. These ideas are not in the things themselves except in the sense that a thing is 'in' its cause. Thirdly, when we think that one substance can cause an alteration in the primary qualities of another, so that the altered substance would produce in us different ideas from what it did before, we speak of the active *powers* of the first substance and the passive *powers* of the second. We know about the powers of things only through sensible simple ideas. For example, whatever alteration a loadstone has the power to make in the minute particles of iron, we wouldn't suspect that it had *any* power to affect iron if that power weren't revealed by how the loadstone makes the iron particles move. I have no doubt that bodies that we handle every day have powers to cause thousands of changes in one another—powers that we never suspect because they never appear in sensible effects.

**10.** So it is proper that powers should loom large in our complex ideas of substances. If you examine your complex idea of *gold*, you'll find that several of the ideas that make it up are only ideas of powers. For example, the power of being melted without being burned away, and the power of being dissolved in aqua regia [a mixture of nitric and hydrochloric acids]—these ideas are as essential to our complex idea of

gold as are its colour and weight. Indeed, colour and weight when properly understood turn out also to be nothing but powers. For yellowness is not actually in gold, but is a power that gold has, when placed in proper light, to produce a certain idea in us through our eyes. Similarly, the heat that we can't leave out of our idea of the sun is no more really in the sun than is the white colour it gives to wax. These are both equally powers in the sun, which operates on a man—through the motion and shape of its sensible parts—so as to make him have the idea of heat; just as it operates on wax so as to make it capable of producing in a man the idea of white.

**11.** If our senses were sharp enough to distinguish the minute particles of bodies and the real constitution on which their sensible qualities depend, I am sure they would produce in us ideas quite different from the ones they now produce; the yellow colour of gold, for example, would be replaced by an admirable texture of parts of a certain size and shape. Microscopes plainly tell us this; for what to our naked eyes produces a certain colour is revealed through a microscope to be quite different. Thus sand or ground glass, which is opaque and white to the naked eye, is transparent under a microscope; and a hair seen this way loses its former colour and is mostly transparent, with a mixture of bright sparkling colours like the ones refracted from a diamond. Blood to the naked eye appears all red; but when its lesser parts are brought into view by a good microscope, it turns out to be a clear liquid with a few red globules floating in it. We don't know how these red globules would appear if glasses could be found that would magnify them a thousand or ten thousand times more.

**12.** God in his infinite wisdom has given us senses, faculties, and organs that are suitable for the conveniences of life

and for the business we have to do here. senses enable us to know and distinguish things, and to examine them in enough detail to be able to make use of them and in various ways accommodate them to our daily needs. insight into their admirable structures and wonderful effects goes far enough for us to admire and praise the wisdom, power, and goodness of their author. . . . But it seems that God didn't intend that we should have a perfect, clear, and adequate knowledge of things; and perhaps no finite being *can* have such knowledge. faculties, dull and weak as they are, suffice for us to discover enough in created things to lead us to •the knowledge of the creator, and •the knowledge of our duty; and we are also equipped with enough abilities to •provide for the conveniences of living. These are our business in this world. But if our senses were made much keener and more acute, the surface appearances of things would be quite different for us, and, I'm inclined to think that this would be inconsistent with our survival—or at least with our well-being—in this part of the universe that we inhabit. Think about how little we are fitted to survive being moved into air not much higher than the air we commonly breathe—that will give you reason to be satisfied that on this planet that has been assigned as our home God has suited our organs to the bodies that are to affect them, and vice versa. If our sense of hearing were merely one thousand times more acute than it is, how distracted we would be by perpetual noise! Even in the quietest retirement we would be less able to sleep or meditate than we are now in the middle of a sea-battle. If someone's eyesight (the most instructive of our senses) were a thousand or a hundred thousand times more acute than it is now through the best microscope, he would be able to see with his naked eyes things several million times smaller than the smallest object he can see now; •and this would have •a good result and •a bad one. •It would bring

him nearer to discovering the texture and motion of the minute parts of corporeal things, and he would probably get ideas of the internal structures of many of them. But then •he would be in a quite different world from other people: nothing would appear the same to him as to others; the visible ideas of everything would be different. So that I don't think that he could converse with others concerning the objects of sight, or communicate in any way about colours, their appearances being so wholly different. [The section continues with further remarks about the disadvantages of having 'such microscopical eyes (if I may so call them)'. It ends thus:] Someone who was sharp-sighted enough to see the arrangement of the minute particles of the spring of a clock, and observe the special structure and ways of moving on which its elastic motion depends, would no doubt discover something very admirable. But if his eyes were so formed that he couldn't *tell the time* by his clock, because he couldn't from a distance take in all at once the clock-hand and the numerals on the dial, he wouldn't get much advantage from the acuteness of his sight: it would let him in on the structure and workings of the parts of the machine while also making it useless to him!

[In section **13**—an admitted interruption of the main line of thought—Locke remarks that the structure of our sense organs is what sets limits to what we can perceive in the material world, and offers his 'extravagant conjecture' about 'Spirits', here meaning something like 'angels'. Assuming that they 'sometimes' have bodies, angels may be able to alter their sense organs at will, thus being able to perceive many things that we can't. Locke can't hide his envy about this, though he says that 'no doubt' God has good reasons for giving us sense-organs that we cannot flex at will, like muscles.]

**14.** Each of our ideas of a specific kind of substances is nothing but a collection of simple ideas considered as united in one thing. These ideas of substances, though they strike us as simple and have simple words as names, are nevertheless really complex and compounded. Thus the idea that an Englishman signifies by the name 'swan', is white colour, long neck, red beak, black legs, and webbed feet, and all these of a certain size, with a power of swimming in the water, and making a certain kind of noise—and perhaps other properties as well, for someone who knows a lot about this kind of bird—all united in one common subject.

**15.** Besides the complex ideas we have of •material sensible substances, we can also form the complex idea of an •immaterial spirit. We get this through the simple ideas we have taken from operations of our own minds that we experience daily in ourselves, such as

thinking  
understanding  
willing  
knowing, and  
power of beginning motion, etc.

all co-existing in some substance. By putting these ideas together, we have as clear a perception and notion of immaterial substances as we have of material ones. For putting together the ideas of •thinking and •willing and •the power of starting or stopping bodily motion, joined to *substance*, of which we have no distinct idea, we have the idea of an •immaterial spirit; and by putting together the ideas of •solid parts that hold together, and •a power of being moved, joined with *substance*, of which likewise we have no positive idea, we have the idea of •matter. [Here 'positive' contrasts with 'relative'. The *idea of substance in general* is relative because it is only the idea of whatever-it-is that relates to qualities by upholding and uniting them.]



The one is as clear and distinct an idea as the other, the ideas of thinking and moving a body being as clear and distinct as the ideas of extension, solidity, and being moved. For our idea of substance is equally obscure, or none at all, in both: It is merely a supposed *I know not what*, to support qualities. Those who believe that our senses show us nothing but material things haven't thought hard enough! When you think about it, you'll realize that every act of sensation gives us an equal view of both parts of nature, the corporeal and the spiritual [= 'the bodily and the mental']. For while I know by seeing or hearing etc. that there is some bodily thing outside me that is the object of that sensation, I know with even more certainty that there is some spiritual being within me that sees and hears. This seeing and hearing can't be done by mere senseless matter; it couldn't occur except as the action of an immaterial thinking being.

**16.** All that we know of body is contained in our complex idea of it as extended, shaped, coloured, and having other sensible qualities; and all this is as far from the idea of the substance of body as we would be if we knew nothing at all. And although we think we are very familiar with matter, and know a great deal about many of its qualities, it may turn out that our basic ideas of •body are no more numerous, and no clearer, than our basic ideas of •immaterial spirit.

**17.** The basic ideas that we have that apply to body and not to spirit are •the holding together of parts that are solid and therefore separable, and •a power of causing things to move by colliding with them. Bodies also have shapes, but shape is merely a consequence of finite extension.

**18.** The ideas we have belonging exclusively to spirit are •thinking and •will (which is the power of putting body into motion by thought) and •liberty. Whereas a body can't help setting in motion a motionless body with which it collides,

the mind is at liberty to put bodies into motion or refrain from doing so, as it pleases. The ideas of •existence, •duration, and •mobility are common to both body and spirit.

**19.** It shouldn't be thought strange that I attribute mobility to spirit. Spirits, like bodies can only operate *where they are*; we find that a single spirit operates at different times in different places; so I have to attribute *change of place* to all finite spirits (I'm not speaking of •God•, the infinite spirit, here). For my soul [= 'spirit' = 'mind'] is a real thing just as much as my body is, and is equally capable of changing its distance from any other •spatially located• being; and so it is capable of motion. . . .

**20.** Everyone finds in himself that his soul •can think, will, and operate on his body in the place where that body is, but •cannot operate on a body or in a place a hundred miles away. You can't imagine that your soul could think or move a body in Oxford while you are in London, and you have to realize that your soul, being united to your body, continually changes its location during the whole journey between Oxford and London, just as does the coach or horse that you ride on—so I think it can be said to be truly *in motion* throughout that journey. If that isn't conceded as giving a clear idea enough of the soul's motion, you will get one from •the thought of• its being separated from the body in death; for it seems to impossible that you should think of it as •leaving the body while having no idea of •its motion.

[In section **21** Locke discusses a scholastic reason for denying that souls or spirits can move, and derisively challenges its supporters 'to put it into intelligible English'. He concludes:] Indeed motion cannot be attributed to God—not because he is an immaterial spirit but because he is an infinite one.

**22.** Let us compare our complex idea of *immaterial spirit* with our complex idea of *body*, and see whether one is more obscure than the other—and if so, which. idea of body, I think, is that of

*an extended solid substance, capable of transferring motion by impact;*

and our idea of soul or immaterial spirit is the idea of

*a substance that thinks, and has a power of making a body move, by willing or thought.*

Which of these is more obscure and harder to grasp? I know that people whose thoughts are immersed in matter, and have so subjected their minds to their senses that they seldom reflect on anything that their senses can't reach, are apt to say that they can't comprehend a *thinking thing*. Perhaps they can't, but then if they think hard about it they'll realize that they can't comprehend an *extended thing* either.

**23.** If anyone says 'I don't know what it is that thinks in me', he means that he doesn't know what the substance is of that thinking thing. I respond that he has no better grasp of what the substance is of that solid thing. If he also says 'I don't know *how* I think', I respond that he also doesn't know *how* he is extended—that is, how the solid parts of body cohere together to make extension. I shall discuss the cohesion problem—the problem of explaining how portions of matter hang together to compose planets or pebbles or grains of sand—from here through to the end of section 27. The pressure of the particles of air may account for the cohesion of some parts of matter that are bigger than the particles of air and have pores that are smaller than those particles; but that can't explain the coherence of the particles of air themselves. Whatever holds *them* together, it isn't the pressure of the air! And if the pressure of any matter that is finer than the air—such as the *ether*—can

unite and hold together the parts of a particle of air (as well as of other bodies), it still can't make bonds *for itself* and hold together the parts that make up every least particle of that *materia subtilis* [= 'extra-fine matter']. Thus, however ingeniously we develop our explanation of how the parts of perceptible bodies are held together by the pressure of other imperceptible bodies such as the particles of the ether, that explanation doesn't extend to the parts of the ether itself. The more success we have in showing that the parts of other bodies are held together by the external pressure of the ether, and can have no other conceivable cause of their cohesion and union, the more completely we are left in the dark about what holds together the *parts of each particle* of the ether itself. We can't conceive of those particles as not having parts, because they are bodies, and thus divisible; but we also can't conceive of how their parts cohere, because the explanation of how *everything else* coheres cannot be applied to *them*.

**24.** The foregoing argument shows that even if pressure from the ether *could* explain the cohesion of most bodies, it leaves unexplained the cohesion of the particles of the ether itself. But in fact pressure, however great, from a surrounding fluid such as the ether cannot be what causes the cohesion of the solid parts of matter. Such a pressure might prevent two things with polished surfaces from moving apart in a line perpendicular to those surfaces, . . . but it can't even slightly hinder their pulling apart in a line parallel to those surfaces—I shall call this a 'lateral motion'. The surrounding fluid is free to occupy each part of space that is deserted through such a lateral motion; so it doesn't resist such a motion of bodies joined in that way, any more than it would resist the motion of a body that was surrounded on all sides by that fluid and didn't touch any other body.

And therefore, if there were no other cause of cohesion than this surrounding-fluid one, all parts of all bodies would be easily separable by such a lateral sliding motion. So it is no harder for us to have a clear idea of how the soul thinks than to have one of how body is extended. For the extendedness of body consists in nothing but the union and cohesion of its solid parts, so we shall have a poor grasp of the extension of body when we don't understand the union and cohesion of its parts; and we *don't* understand that, any more than we understand what thinking is and how it is performed.

**25.** Most people would wonder how anyone should see a difficulty in what they think they observe every day. 'Don't we see the parts of bodies stick firmly together? Is there anything more common? And what doubt can there be made of it?' And similarly with regard to thinking and voluntary motion: 'Don't we experience it every moment in ourselves? So can it be doubted?' The matter of fact is clear, I agree, but when we want to look more closely and think about *how* it is done, we are at a loss both about extension and about thought. . . .

**26.** The little bodies that compose the fluid we call 'water' are so extremely small that I have never heard of anyone claiming to see their distinct size, shape, or motion through a microscope (and I've heard of microscopes that have magnified up to a hundred thousand times, and more). And the particles of water are also so perfectly loose one from another that the least force perceptibly separates them. Indeed, if we think about their perpetual motion we must accept that they *don't* cohere with another; and when a sharp cold comes they unite, they consolidate, these little atoms cohere, and they can't be separated without great force. Something we don't yet know—and it would be a great discovery—is what the bonds are that tie these heaps of loose little bodies

together so firmly, what the cement is that sticks them so tightly together in ice. But someone who made that discovery would still be long way from solving the *general* problem, making intelligible the extension of body (which is the cohesion of its solid parts). For *that* he would need to show how the parts of those bonds—or of that cement, or of the least particle of matter that exists—hold together. It seems, then, that this primary and supposedly obvious quality of body, extension, turns out when examined to be as incomprehensible as anything belonging to our minds, and that it is as hard to conceive a solid extended substance as it is to conceive a thinking immaterial one. . . .

**27.** Here is a further difficulty about solving the cohesion problem through an appeal to surrounding pressures. Let us suppose that matter is finite (as no doubt it is). Now think about the outermost bounds of the universe, and ask yourself:

What conceivable hoops, what bond, can hold *this unified mass of matter* together with a pressure from which steel must get its strength and diamonds their hardness and indissolubility?

If matter is finite, it must have boundaries, and there must be something that stops it from scattering in all directions. If you try to avoid this latest difficulty by supposing that the material world is *infinite* in extent, ask yourself what light you are throwing on the cohesion of body—whether you are making it more intelligible by relying on the most absurd and incomprehensible of all suppositions. So far is our idea of the extension of body (which is nothing but the cohesion of solid parts) from being clearer or more distinct when we enquire into the nature, cause, or manner of it, than is the idea of thinking!

**28.** Another idea that we have of body is ·the idea of· the *power of transferring motion by impact*: and of our souls ·the idea of· *the power of exciting motion by thought*. Everyday experience clearly provides us with these two ideas, but here again if we enquire how each power is exercised, we are equally in the dark. In the most usual case of motion's being communicated from one body to another through impact, the former body loses as much motion as the other acquires; and the only conception we have of what is going on here is that *motion passes out of one body into the other*. That seems to me to be as obscure and inconceivable as how our minds move or stop our bodies by thought, which we every moment find they do. Daily experience provides us with clear evidence of motion produced by impact, and of motion produced by thought; but as for *how* this is done, we are equally at a loss with both. So that when we think about •the communication of motion, whether by body or by spirit, •the idea of it that is involved in spirit-as-mover is at least as clear as •the one involved in body-as-mover. And if we consider the *active power of moving* (called 'motivity' ·in xxi.73·), it is much clearer in spirit than body. Place two bodies at rest side by side; they give us no idea of a power in the one to move the other, except through a borrowed motion. The mind, on the other hand, every day gives us ideas of an active power of moving bodies. This gives us reason to think that active power may be the proper [here = 'exclusive'] attribute of spirits, and passive power the proper attribute of matter. If that is so, then created spirits are not totally other than matter, because as well as being active (as matter isn't) they are also passive (as matter is). Pure spirit, namely God, is only active; pure matter is only passive; and beings ·like us· that are both active and passive may be judged to involve both. . . .

**29.** In conclusion: Sensation convinces us that there are •solid extended substances, and reflection that there are •thinking ones. Experience assures us that •one has a power to move body by impact, •the other by thought. That much is sure, and we have clear ideas of it; but we can't go any further. If we start asking about nature, causes, and manner ·of operation·, we see no more clearly into the nature of extension than we do into the nature of thinking. It is no harder to conceive how a substance that we don't know should •by thought set body into motion, than how a substance that we don't know should •by impact set body into motion. . . .

[In sections **30–31** Locke sums up the results of the last few sections, re-emphasizing that the idea of a thinking substance is not less respectable than that of an extended substance. He concludes section 31 with a new difficulty about the latter:] Nothing in our notion of spirit is more perplexed, or nearer a contradiction, than something that the very notion of body includes in it, namely the *infinite divisibility* of any finite extended thing. Whether we accept this or reject it, we land ourselves in consequences that we can't explain or make consistent within our thought—consequences that carry greater difficulty, and more apparent absurdity, than anything that follows from the notion of an immaterial knowing substance.

[In section **32** Locke starts by rehearsing the arguments he has given for the view that 'we have as much reason to be satisfied with our notion of immaterial spirit as with our notion of body, and of the existence of the one as well as of the other'. He then launches, without announcing that he is doing so, into a new issue: is a human being an extended thing that thinks, or rather a pair of things of which one is extended and the other thinks?] It is no

more a contradiction that •thinking should exist separate and independent from solidity than that •solidity should exist separate and independent from thinking. Thought and extension are simple ideas, independent one from another; and we are as entitled to allow •a thinking thing without solidity as we are •a solid thing without thinking. It may be hard to conceive how thinking could occur without matter, but it's at least as hard to conceive how matter could think. Whenever we try to get beyond our simple ideas, to dive deeper into the nature of things, we immediately fall into darkness and obscurity, perplexity and difficulties. But whichever of these complex ideas is clearer, that of body or that of immaterial spirit, each is evidently composed of the simple ideas that we have received from sensation or reflection. So are all our other ideas of substances, even that of God himself.

[In section **33** Locke develops that last remark, contending that we can build up our idea of God as infinitely powerful, wise, etc. through a general procedure that he illustrates with an example in section 34.]

**34.** If I find that I know a few things, some or all of them imperfectly, I can form an idea of knowing twice as many; which I can double again, ·and so on indefinitely·, just as I can generate an endless series of numbers by repeated doubling. In that way I can enlarge my idea of knowledge by extending its coverage to all things existing or possible. And I can do the same with regard to knowing them more perfectly, thus forming the idea of infinite or boundless knowledge. The same may also be done for power. . . .and also for the duration of existence. . . . We form the best idea of God that our minds are capable of, by •taking simple ideas from the operations of our own minds (through reflection) or from exterior things (through our senses) and •enlarging them to

the vastness to which infinity can extend them.

**35.** It is infinity—joined to existence, power, knowledge, etc.—that makes our complex idea of God. Although in his own essence (which we don't know, any more than we know the real essence of a pebble, or of a fly, or of ourselves) God may be simple and uncompounded, still our only idea of him is a complex one whose parts are the ideas of existence, knowledge, power, happiness, etc.—all this infinite and eternal. . . .

**36.** Apart from infinity, there is no idea we attribute to God that isn't also a part of our complex idea of other Spirits [here = something like 'angels']. We can attribute to Spirits only ideas that we get from reflection; and we can differentiate them ·from God on one side, and from us on the other· only through differences in the extent and degree of knowledge, power, duration, happiness, etc. that each has. Here is another bit of evidence that we are confined to the ideas that we receive from sensation and reflection: even if we think of ·unembodied· Spirits as ever so much, even *infinitely*, more advanced than bodies are, we still can't have any idea of how they reveal their thoughts one to another. We have to use physical signs and particular sounds; they are the best and quickest we are capable of, which makes them the most useful we can find. Of course unembodied Spirits must have also a more perfect way of communicating their thoughts than we have; but of such immediate communication we have no experience in ourselves, and consequently no notion at all.

**37.** Now we have seen what kind of ideas we have of substances of all kinds, what they consist in, and how we came by them. All this, I think, makes three things very evident. **1** All our ideas of the various sorts of substances are nothing but collections of simple ideas, together with a supposition

of something to which they belong and in which they exist, though we have no clear distinct idea at all of this supposed something. **2** All the simple ideas which—when thus united in one common substratum—make up our complex ideas of various sorts of substances are received from sensation or reflection. Even those extremely familiar ideas that apply to almost everything—such as the ideas of *time*, *motion*, *body*, *thought*, *feeling*—have such simple ideas of sensation and reflection as their only ingredients. So do the ideas that seem furthest from having any connection with us, and that infinitely surpass anything we can perceive in ourselves by reflection or discover by sensation in other things. Even those ideas must be constructed out of the simple ideas that we originally received from sensation or reflection. This is clearly the case with respect to the complex ideas we have of angels, and especially our idea of God. **3** Most of the simple ideas that make up our complex ideas of substances are really only ideas of powers, however apt we are to think of them as ideas of positive qualities. [Here again 'positive'

contrasts with 'relative'.] For example, most of the ideas that make our complex idea of gold are yellowness, great weight, ductility, fusibility and solubility in aqua regia, etc. all united together in an unknown substratum; and these are all ideas of gold's relations to other substances. To be heavy is to have a power to outweigh other things; to be yellow is to have a power to cause certain visual sensations in human observers. [Ductility is the ability to be drawn out into a thin wire, and fusibility is the ability to melt when hot; neither of which is a relation to other substances. Perhaps Locke has a different thought at work here, not properly expressed: he may be contrasting 'positive' qualities not only with relative qualities but also with conditional ones. Attributing a power to something is asserting a conditional about it—If it is heated, it will melt. A positive quality such as squareness isn't like that: the thing just is square, and 'if' doesn't come into it.] These powers depend on the real and primary qualities of the gold's internal constitution; they are what give it its power to operate on other substances and to be operated on by them; but the powers aren't really in the gold considered purely in itself.

## Chapter xxiv: Collective ideas of substances

**1.** Besides these complex ideas of various kinds of single substances—*man*, *horse*, *gold*, *violet*, *apple*, etc. the mind also has complex collective ideas of substances. Such ideas are made up of many particular substances considered together as united into one idea, and which, so joined, are looked on as one. For example, the idea of a collection of men that make an army, though it consists of a great many distinct substances, is as much one idea as the idea of a

man. Similarly with the great collective idea of all bodies whatsoever, signified by the name 'world'...

[In section **2** Locke contends that power of the mind whereby it makes collective ideas out of complex ideas of individuals is the very one by which it makes the latter ideas out of simple ones. The crux is this:] It is no harder to conceive how an army of ten thousand men should make one idea

than to conceive how a man should make one idea. Each involves constructing a complex out of parts that are simple (or simpler).

**3.** Artifacts, or at least the ones that are made up of distinct substances—e.g. carriages, houses, clocks—fall under collective ideas of the kind I have been discussing. Not only do man-made things tend to fall under collective ideas, but conversely collective ideas are in a special way

man-made. All our collective ideas—such as those of army, constellation, universe—are merely artificial representations made by the mind. Such an idea gathers into a single view, under a single name, things that are very remote from and independent of one another, so as better to think and talk about them. As the meaning of the word ‘universe’ shows, no things are so remote or unlike that the mind can’t bring them under a single idea by this technique of composition.