

John Locke's (1632–1704) Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1689)

- The Project of the *Essay*
- Against Innate Knowledge
- Ideas and their Origin
- Simple ideas
- Primary and Secondary Qualities
- Complex Ideas
- Substance/substratum
- Natural kinds
- Body
- Mind
- Personal Identity
- The Limits of Knowledge
- God

As Locke admits, his Essay is something of a mess, from an editorial point of view. What follows are what I take to be some of the most important passages from the book, grouped under topical headings in an attempt to make a coherent and systematic whole. Parts and headings are given in bold and are purely my invention. Section headings are given in italics, and are Locke's. Otherwise, all material in italics is mine, not Locke's. '...' indicates an omission.

The Essay is organized into Books, Chapters, and Sections. The start of each section cites book.chapter.section. For example, 'I.i.5' means Book I, chapter i, section 5.

(Textual note: the standard edition of the Essay is that of P.H. Nidditch (Oxford, 1975); but Roger Woolhouse's Penguin edition is superior in some respects.)

<!--The headings are as follows:

- A. The Project
- B. Against Innate Knowledge
- C. Ideas and their Origin
- D. Simple Ideas
- E. Primary and Secondary Qualities
- F. Complex Ideas
- G. Substance/substratum
- H. Natural Kinds
- I. Body
- J. Mind
- K. Personal Identity
- L. The Limits of Knowledge
- M. God-->

The Project of the *Essay*

(From *The Epistle to the Reader*) Were it fit to trouble thee with the history of this Essay, I should tell thee, that five or six friends meeting at my chamber, and discoursing on a subject very remote from this, found themselves quickly at a stand, by the difficulties that rose on every side. After we had awhile puzzled ourselves, without coming any nearer a resolution of those doubts which perplexed us, it came into my thoughts that we took a wrong course; and that before we set ourselves upon inquiries of that nature, it was necessary to examine our own abilities, and see what **objects** our understandings were, or were not, fitted to deal with. ...

The commonwealth of learning is not at this time without master-builders, whose mighty designs, in advancing the sciences, will leave lasting monuments to the admiration of posterity: but every one must not hope to be a Boyle or a Sydenham; and in an age that produces such masters as the great Huygenius and the incomparable Mr. Newton, with some others of that strain, it is ambition enough to be employed as an under-labourer in clearing the ground a little, and removing some of the rubbish that lies in the way to knowledge ...

(From I.i.1—*An Inquiry into the Understanding pleasant and useful*) Since it is the **understanding** that sets man above the rest of sensible beings, and gives him all the advantage and dominion which he has over them; it is certainly a subject, even for its nobleness, worth our labour to inquire into. The understanding, like the eye, whilst it makes us see and perceive all other things, takes no notice of itself; and it requires an art and pains to set it at a distance and make it its own object. ...

(From I.i.2—*Design*) This, therefore, being my purpose—to inquire into the original, certainty, and extent of **human knowledge**, together with the grounds and degrees of **belief, opinion, and assent** ...

(From I.i.3—*Method*) It is therefore worth while to search out the bounds between opinion and knowledge; and examine by what measures, in things whereof we have no certain knowledge, we ought to regulate our assent and moderate our persuasion. In order whereunto I shall pursue this following method: First, I shall inquire into the original of those ideas, notions, or whatever else you please to call them, which a man observes, and is conscious to himself he has in his mind; and the ways whereby the understanding comes to be furnished with them. Secondly, I shall endeavour to show what knowledge the understanding hath by those ideas; and the certainty, evidence, and extent of it. Thirdly, I shall make some inquiry into the nature and grounds of **faith** or **opinion**: whereby I mean that assent which we give to any proposition as true, of whose truth yet we have no certain knowledge. And here we shall have occasion to examine the reasons and degrees of **assent**.

(From I.i.4—*Useful to know the Extent of our Comprehension*) If we can find out how far the understanding can extend its view; how far it has faculties to attain certainty; and in what cases it can only judge and guess, we may learn to content ourselves with what is attainable by us in this state.

(From I.i.5—*Our Capacity suited to our State and Concerns*) It will be no excuse to an idle and untoward servant, who would not attend his business by candle light, to plead that he had not broad sunshine. The Candle that is set up in us shines bright enough for all our purposes.

(From I.i.6—*Knowledge of our Capacity a Cure of Scepticism and Idleness*) When we know our own strength, we shall the better know what to undertake with hopes of success; and when we have well surveyed the **powers** of our own minds, and made some estimate what we may expect from them, we shall not be inclined either to sit still, and not set our thoughts on work at all, in despair of knowing anything; nor on the other side, question everything, and disclaim all knowledge, because some things are not to be understood. It is of great use to the sailor to know the length of his line, though he cannot with it fathom all the depths of the ocean. It is well he knows that it is long enough to reach the bottom, at such places as are necessary to direct his voyage, and caution him against running upon shoals that may ruin him. Our business here is not to know all things, but those which concern our conduct. If we can find out those measures, whereby a rational creature, put in that state in which man is in this world, may and ought to govern his opinions, and actions depending thereon, we need not to be troubled that some other things escape our knowledge.

1. What is Locke's main project in the *Essay*?

2. What's the point of pursuing it? What advantages does he expect to obtain from it?
3. What is distinctive about Locke's project? What would Locke think of the method of, say, Spinoza?

Against Innate Knowledge

Given Locke's project, it makes sense that he begins by attacking the doctrine of innate knowledge. This attack was partly responsible for the *Essay's* being banned at Oxford in 1704. Can you think why these thoughts might sound dangerous, and why Locke's project begins where it does?

(From I.ii.5—*Not on Mind naturally imprinted, because not known to Children, Idiots, &c.*) For, first, it is evident, that all children and idiots have not the least apprehension or thought of them. And the want of that is enough to destroy that universal assent which must needs be the necessary concomitant of all innate truths: it seeming to me near a contradiction to say, that there are truths imprinted on the soul, which it perceives or understands not: imprinting, if it signify anything, being nothing else but the making certain truths to be perceived. For to imprint anything on the mind without the mind's perceiving it, seems to me hardly intelligible. If therefore children and idiots have souls, have minds, with those impressions upon them, *they* must unavoidably perceive them ...

[I]f the capacity of knowing be the natural impression contended for, all the truths a man ever comes to know will, by this account, be every one of them innate; and this great point will amount to no more, but only to a very improper way of speaking; which, whilst it pretends to assert the contrary, says nothing different from those who deny innate principles. For nobody, I think, ever denied that the mind was capable of knowing several truths.

(From I.ii.15—*The Steps by which the Mind attains several Truths*) The senses at first let in **particular** ideas, and furnish the yet empty cabinet, and the mind by degrees growing familiar with some of them, they are lodged in the memory, and names got to them. Afterwards, the mind proceeding further, abstracts them, and by degrees learns the use of general names. In this manner the mind comes to be furnished with ideas and language, the **materials** about which to exercise its discursive faculty. And the use of reason becomes daily more visible, as these materials that give it employment increase. But though the having of general ideas and the use of general words and reason usually grow together, yet I see not how this any way proves them innate.

(From I.iv.20—*No innate Ideas in the Memory*) To which let me add: if there be any innate ideas, any ideas in the mind which the mind does not actually think on, they must be lodged in the memory; and from thence must be brought into view by remembrance; i.e., must be known, when they are remembered, to have been perceptions in the mind before; unless remembrance can be without remembrance. For, to remember is to perceive anything with memory, or with a consciousness that it was perceived or known before. Without this, whatever idea comes into the mind is new, and not remembered; this consciousness of its having been in the mind before, being that which distinguishes remembering from all other ways of thinking.

Whatever idea was never **perceived** by the mind was never in the mind. Whatever idea is in the mind, is, either an actual perception, or else, having been an actual perception, is so in the mind that, by the memory, it can be made an actual perception again. Whenever there is the actual perception of any idea without memory, the idea appears perfectly new and unknown before to the understanding. Whenever the memory brings any idea into actual view, it is with a consciousness that it had been there before, and was not wholly a stranger to the mind. Whether this be not so, I appeal to every one's observation. And then I desire an instance of an idea, pretended to be innate, which (before any impression of it by ways hereafter to be mentioned) any one could revive and remember, as an idea he had formerly known; without which consciousness of a former perception there is no remembrance; and whatever idea comes into the mind without *that* consciousness is not remembered, or comes not out of the memory, nor can be said to be in the mind before that appearance. For what is not either actually in view or in the memory, is in the mind no way at all, and is all one as if it had never been there. ...

[W]hatever idea, being not actually in view, is in the mind, is there only by being in the memory; and if it be not in the memory, it is not in the mind; and if it be in the memory, it cannot by the memory be brought into actual view

without a perception that it comes out of the memory; which is this, that it had been known before, and is now remembered. If therefore there be any innate ideas, they must be in the memory, or else nowhere in the mind; and if they be in the memory, they can be revived without any impression from without; and whenever they are brought into the mind they are remembered, i. e. They bring with them a perception of their not being wholly new to it. ...

By this it may be tried whether there be any innate ideas in the mind before impression from sensation or reflection. I would fain meet with the man who, when he came to the use of reason, or at any other time, remembered any of them; and to whom, after he was born, they were never new. If any one will say, there are ideas in the mind that are *not* in the memory, I desire him to explain himself, and make what he says intelligible.

-
1. Why is Locke concerned to deny the doctrine of innate principles? Can you connect this with Locke's project?
 2. Can you extract an argument from these texts that might apply to innate ideas (as opposed to principles)? There seem to be three possible ways to cash out what it means to say that an idea is innate. It might be innate as a capacity; it might always be present to the mind; or it might be lodged in the memory. What does Locke think is wrong with this last option (memory)? (See esp. Chapter 4, Section 20 above—hint: Locke seems to think there's something contradictory about innateness.)

Premise 1: An innate idea is in the memory.

Premise 2: Any idea in the memory, when recovered, brings with it...

Ideas and their Origin

It's one thing to attack the doctrines of innate knowledge and innate ideas; it's another to come up with a replacement for them. Locke must explain how all our ideas are generated solely out of the materials given to us in experience, and how experience alone can justify our knowledge claims.

(From I.1.8—*What Idea stands for*) Thus much I thought necessary to say concerning the occasion of this inquiry into human understanding. But, before I proceed on to what I have thought on this subject, I must here in the entrance beg pardon of my reader for the frequent use of the word **idea**, which he will find in the following treatise. It being that term which, I think, serves best to stand for whatsoever is the **object** of the understanding when a man thinks, I have used it to express whatever is meant by **phantasm**, **notion**, **species**, or **whatever** it is **which the mind can be employed about in thinking**; and I could not avoid frequently using it. I presume it will be easily granted me, that there are such **ideas** in men's minds: every one is conscious of them in himself; and men's words and actions will satisfy him that they are in others.

(From IV.xxi.4) [S]ince the things the mind contemplates are none of them, besides itself, present to the understanding, it is necessary that something else, as a sign or representation of the thing it considers, should be present to it: and these are **ideas**.

(From II.i.2—*All Ideas come from Sensation or Reflection*) Let us then suppose the mind to be, as we say, white paper, void of all characters, without any ideas: how comes it to be furnished? ... To this I answer, in one word, from **experience**. In that all our knowledge is founded; and from that it ultimately derives itself. Our observation employed either, about external sensible objects, or about the internal operations of our minds perceived and reflected on by ourselves, is that which supplies our understandings with all the **materials** of thinking. These two are the fountains of knowledge, from whence all the ideas we have, or can naturally have, do spring.

(From II.i.3—*The Objects of Sensation one Source of Ideas*) First, our senses, conversant about particular sensible objects, do convey into the mind several distinct perceptions of things, according to those various ways wherein those objects

do affect them. And thus we come by those **ideas** we have of yellow, white, heat, cold, soft, hard, bitter, sweet, and all those which we call sensible qualities ...

(From II.i.4—*The Operations of our Minds, the other Source of them*) Secondly, the other fountain from which experience furnisheth the understanding with ideas is, the perception of the operations of our own mind within us, as it is employed about the ideas it has got. ... And such are perception, thinking, doubting, believing, reasoning, knowing, willing, and all the different actings of our own minds ...

(From II.i.5—*All our Ideas are of the one or of the other of these*) ... These, when we have taken a full survey of them, and their several modes, and the compositions made out of them we shall find to contain all our whole stock of ideas; and that we have nothing in our minds which did not come in one of these two ways. Let any one examine his own thoughts, and thoroughly search into his understanding; and then let him tell me, whether all the original ideas he has there, are any other than of the objects of his senses, or of the operations of his mind, considered as objects of his reflection.

Locke thinks that sensation and reflection are our only sources of ideas. We should now look at his response to Descartes's argument for a third source of ideas, namely, the intellect (see the second paragraph of the [Sixth Meditation](#)).

(From II.xxix.13—*Complex ideas may be distinct in one part, and confused in another*) Our complex ideas, being made up of collections, and so variety of simple ones, may accordingly be very clear and distinct in one part, and very obscure and confused in another. In a man who speaks of a chiliaedron, or a body of a thousand sides, the ideas of the figure may be very confused, though that of the number be very distinct; so that he being able to discourse and demonstrate concerning that part of his complex idea which depends upon the number of thousand, he is apt to think he has a distinct idea of a chiliaedron; though it be plain he has no precise idea of its figure, so as to distinguish it, by that, from one that has but 999 sides: the not observing whereof causes no small error in men's thoughts, and confusion in their discourses.

1. How does Locke respond to Descartes's [argument](#) for the distinction between the intellect and the imagination? Who is right?

Simple ideas

(From II.i.1—*Uncompounded Appearances*) The better to understand the nature, manner, and extent of our knowledge, one thing is carefully to be observed concerning the ideas we have; and that is, that some of them, are **simple** and some **complex**.

Though the qualities that affect our senses are, in the things themselves, so united and blended, that there is no separation, no distance between them; yet it is plain, the ideas they produce in the mind enter by the senses simple; and unmixed. For, though the sight and touch often take in from the same object, at the same time, different ideas;—as a man sees at once motion and colour; the hand feels softness and warmth in the same piece of wax: yet the simple ideas thus united in the same subject, are as perfectly distinct as those that come in by different senses.

(From II.iii.1—*Division of simple ideas*) The better to conceive the ideas we receive from sensation, it may not be amiss for us to consider them, in reference to the different ways whereby they make their approaches to our minds, and make themselves perceivable by us. **First**, then, there are some which come into our minds by **one sense only**. **Secondly**, there are others that convey themselves into the mind by **more senses than one**. **Thirdly**, others that are had from **reflection only**. **Fourthly**, there are some that make themselves way, and are suggested to the mind by **all the ways of sensation and reflection**.

1. Classify these ideas, according to the above system (II.iii.1):

- 1.1 the idea of blue _____
- 1.2 the idea of square _____
- 1.3 the idea of hoping _____
- 1.4 the idea of straight _____

As we'll see, some ideas turn out to be ideas of powers rather than of qualities. So we'll need a story about how we get our idea of power as a building block, before we can move on to the primary/secondary quality distinction.

(From II.xxi.1—*This Idea [of power] how got*) The mind being every day informed, by the senses, of the alteration of those simple ideas it observes in things without; and taking notice how one comes to an end, and ceases to be, and another begins to exist which was not before; reflecting also on what passes within itself, and observing a constant change of its ideas, sometimes by the impression of outward objects on the senses, and sometimes by the determination of its own choice; and concluding from what it has so constantly observed to have been, that the like changes will for the future be made in the same things, by like agents, and by the like 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 which we call **power**. Thus we say, fire has a power to melt gold, i.e., to destroy the consistency of its insensible parts, and consequently its hardness, and make it fluid ... In which, and the like cases, the power we consider is in reference to the change of perceivable ideas. For we cannot observe any alteration to be made in, or operation upon anything, but by the observable change of its sensible ideas; nor conceive any alteration to be made, but by conceiving a change of some of its ideas.

(From II.xxi.2—*Power, active and passive*) Power thus considered is two-fold, viz. As able to make, or able to receive any change. The one may be called **active**, and the other **passive** power. Whether matter be not wholly destitute of active power, as its author, God, is truly above all passive power; and whether the intermediate state of created spirits be not that alone which is capable of both active and passive power, may be worth consideration. I shall not now enter into that inquiry, my present business being not to search into the original of power, but how we come by the **idea** of it. But since active powers make so great a part of our complex ideas of natural substances, (as we shall see hereafter,) and I mention them as such, according to common apprehension; yet they being not, perhaps, so truly **active** powers as our hasty thoughts are apt to represent them, I judge it not amiss, by this intimation, to direct our minds to the consideration of god and spirits, for the clearest idea of **active** power.

(From II.xxi.3—*Power includes Relation*) I confess power includes in it some kind of **relation** (a relation to action or change,) as indeed which of our ideas of what kind soever, when attentively considered, does not. For, our ideas of extension, duration, and number, do they not all contain in them a secret relation of the parts? figure and motion have something relative in them much more visibly. ... Our idea therefore of power, I think, may well have a place amongst other **simple ideas**, and be considered as one of them; being one of those that make a principal ingredient in our complex ideas of substances, as we shall hereafter have occasion to observe.

(From II.xxi.4—*The clearest Idea of active Power had from Spirit*) [I]f we will consider it attentively, bodies, by our senses, do not afford us so clear and distinct an idea of active power, as we have from reflection on the operations of our minds. For all power relating to action, and there being but two sorts of action whereof we have an idea, viz. Thinking and motion, let us consider whence we have the clearest ideas of the powers which produce these actions.

1. Of thinking, body affords us no idea at all; it is only from reflection that we have that.
2. Neither have we from body any idea of the beginning of motion. A body at rest affords us no idea of any active power to move; and when it is set in motion itself, that motion is rather a passion than an action in it. For, when the ball obeys the motion of a billiard-stick, it is not any action of the ball, but bare passion. Also when by impulse it sets another ball in motion that lay in its way, it only communicates the motion it had

received from another, and loses in itself so much as the other received: which gives us but a very obscure idea of an **active** power of moving in body, whilst we observe it only to **transfer**, but not **produce** any motion.

-
1. *Is the idea of power a simple idea or not? What turns on this?*
 2. *How does the mind form an idea of power?*
 3. *Why does sensation not give us an idea of active power?*

Primary and Secondary Qualities

II.viii is intended as a further discussion of simple ideas. Locke draws what should by now be a familiar distinction. Can you reconstruct Locke's argument?

(From II.viii.7—*Ideas in the Mind, Qualities in Bodies*) To discover the nature of our **ideas** the better, and to, discourse of them intelligibly, it will be convenient to distinguish them as **they are ideas or perceptions in our minds**; and as **they are modifications of matter in the bodies that cause such perceptions** in us ...

(From II.viii.8—*Our Ideas and the Qualities of Bodies*) Whatsoever the mind perceives **in itself**, or is the immediate object of perception, thought, or understanding, that I call **idea**; and the power to produce any idea in our mind, I call **quality** of the subject wherein that power is. Thus a snowball having the power to produce in us the ideas of white, cold, and round—the power to produce those ideas in us, as they are in the snowball, I call qualities; and as they are sensations or perceptions in our understandings, I call them ideas; which **ideas**, if I speak of sometimes as in the things themselves, I would be understood to mean those qualities in the objects which produce them in us.

(From II.viii.9—*Primary Qualities of Bodies*) Concerning these qualities, we, I think, observe these primary ones in bodies that produce simple ideas in us, viz. **solidity, extension, motion or rest, number or figure**. These, which I call **original** or **primary** qualities of body, are wholly inseparable from it; and such as in all the alterations and changes it suffers, all the force can be used upon it, it constantly keeps; and such as sense constantly finds in every particle of matter which has bulk enough to be perceived; and the mind finds inseparable from every particle of matter, though less than to make itself singly be perceived by our senses: e.g., take a grain of wheat, divide it into two parts; each part has still solidity, extension, figure, and mobility: divide it again, and it retains still the same qualities ...

(From II.viii.11—*How Bodies produce Ideas in us*) The next thing to be considered is, how bodies operate one upon another; and that is manifestly by impulse, and nothing else. It being impossible to conceive that body should operate on **what it does not touch** (which is all one as to imagine it can operate where it is not), or when it does touch, operate any other way than by motion.

(From II.viii.13—*How secondary Qualities produce their ideas*) After the same manner that the ideas of these original qualities are produced in us, we may conceive that the ideas of **secondary** qualities are also produced, viz. By the operation of insensible particles on our senses. ... [L]et us suppose at present that, the different motions and figures, bulk and number, of such particles, affecting the several organs of our senses, produce in us those different sensations which we have from the colours and smells of bodies ... It being no more impossible to conceive that god should annex such ideas to such motions, with which they have no similitude, than that he should annex the idea of pain to the motion of a piece of steel dividing our flesh, with which that idea hath no resemblance.

(From II.viii.14—*They depend on the primary Qualities*) What I have said concerning colours and smells may be understood also of tastes and sounds, and other the like sensible qualities; which, whatever reality we by mistake attribute to them, are in truth nothing in the objects themselves, but powers to produce various sensations in us; and depend on those primary qualities, viz. Bulk, figure, texture, and motion of parts and therefore I call them **secondary qualities**.

(From II.viii.15—*Ideas of primary Qualities are Resemblances; of secondary, not*) From whence I think it easy to draw this observation, that the ideas of primary qualities of bodies are resemblances of them, and their patterns do really exist in the bodies themselves, but the ideas produced in us by these secondary qualities have no resemblance of them at all. There is nothing like our ideas, existing in the bodies themselves. They are, in the bodies we denominate from them, only a power to produce those sensations in us...

(From II.viii.17—*The ideas of the Primary alone really exist*) The particular bulk, number, figure, and motion of the parts of fire or snow are really in them, whether any one's senses perceive them or no: and therefore they may be called **real** qualities, because they really exist in those bodies. But light, heat, whiteness, or coldness, are no more really in them than sickness or pain is in manna. Take away the sensation of them; let not the eyes see light or colours, nor the ears hear sounds; let the palate not taste, nor the nose smell, and all colours, tastes, odours, and sounds, as **they are such particular ideas**, vanish and cease, and are reduced to their causes, i.e., bulk, figure, and motion of parts.

(From II.viii.19—*Examples*) Let us consider the red and white colours in porphyry. Hinder light from striking on it, and its colours vanish; it no longer produces any such ideas in us: upon the return of light it produces these appearances on us again. Can any one think any real alterations are made in the porphyry by the presence or absence of light; and that those ideas of whiteness and redness are really in porphyry in the light, when it is plain it **has no colour in the dark**? It has, indeed, such a configuration of particles, both night and day, as are apt, by the rays of light rebounding from some parts of that hard stone, to produce in us the idea of redness, and from others the idea of whiteness; but whiteness or redness are not in it at any time, but such a texture that hath the power to produce such a sensation in us.

(From II.viii.20) Pound an almond, and the clear white colour will be altered into a dirty one, and the sweet taste into an oily one. What real alteration can the beating of the pestle make in an body, but an alteration of the texture of it?

(From II.viii.21—*Explains how water felt as cold by one hand may be warm to the other*) Ideas being thus distinguished and understood, we may be able to give an account how the same water, at the same time, may produce the idea of cold by one hand and of heat by the other: whereas it is impossible that the same water, if those ideas were really in it, should at the same time be both hot and cold. For, if we imagine **warmth**, as it is in our hands, to be nothing but a certain sort and degree of motion in the minute particles of our nerves or animal spirits, we may understand how it is possible that the same water may, at the same time, produce the sensations of heat in one hand and cold in the other; which yet **figure** never does, that never producing the idea of a square by one hand which has produced the idea of a globe by another.

Locke argues for three theses in this chapter:

1. Ideas of secondary qualities do not resemble anything in the objects that 'have' them
2. Secondary qualities depend on primary
3. Secondary qualities are nothing but powers in objects to produce certain ideas in us

If there were no observers or perceivers, what would the world be like, according to Locke? That is, what qualities does a physical object have in itself?

How does Locke argue for his three theses? Let's start with (i): ideas of secondary qualities resemble nothing in the objects.

Recall Aquinas's picture of (bodily) causation: one object (e.g., fire) produces in another the same kind of quality it has in itself (e.g., heat). Why does Locke think that there isn't really any heat in the first object? Let's take a case where fire produces a sensation of heat in a person. If our sensation of heat resembled any quality in the object, that quality would have to be the cause of the heat that it produces.

1. Why does Locke reject this? (see especially II.viii.11 above).
2. Locke argues for a further thesis:
 1. Secondary qualities depend on primary

Why think that the color of an object (i.e., the color ideas it produces in us) depends on its primary qualities? (Hint: use II.viii.20)

Finally, what about thesis (iii): secondary qualities are nothing but powers in objects to produce certain ideas in us? Well, this is just to combine (i) and (ii). If they're not resemblances, and they depend on the primary qualities, then to say that a body has a particular color is just to say that its parts are so arranged as to produce a given idea in us. (Note that primary qualities are powers and genuine qualities in objects; secondary are merely powers.)

But as Locke points out, ideas of secondary qualities depend not just on the objects; they also depend on the perceivers.

1. *Think of as many different ways to change the color of this room as you can.*

Complex Ideas

So far, we've dealt only with simple ideas. But our experience doesn't seem to come to us packaged in simple, discrete elements. So Locke needs to deal with how we generate experiences (and thoughts) of ordinary objects—what he calls 'substances'—out of simple ideas.

(From II.xii.1—*Made by the Mind out of simple Ones*) We have hitherto considered those ideas, in the reception whereof the mind is only passive, which are those simple ones received from sensation and reflection before mentioned, whereof the mind cannot make one to itself, nor have any idea which does not wholly consist of them. ... Ideas thus made up of several simple ones put together, I call **complex**.

(From II.xii.2—*Made voluntarily*) In this faculty of repeating and joining together its ideas, the mind has great power in varying and multiplying the objects of its thoughts, infinitely beyond what sensation or reflection furnished it with: but all this still confined to those simple ideas which it received from those two sources, and which are the ultimate materials of all its compositions.

(From II.xii.3—*Complex ideas are either of Modes, Substances, or Relations*)

(From II.xxiii.1—*Ideas of substances, how made*) The mind being, as I have declared, furnished with a great number of the simple ideas, conveyed in by the senses as they are found in exterior things, or by reflection on its own operations, takes notice also that a certain number of these simple ideas go constantly together; which being presumed to belong to one thing, and words being suited to common apprehensions, and made use of for quick dispatch are called, so united in one subject, by one name; which, by inadvertency, we are apt afterward to talk of and consider as one simple idea, which indeed is a complication of many ideas together: because, as I have said, not imagining how these simple ideas **can** subsist by themselves, we accustom ourselves to suppose some **substratum** wherein they do subsist, and from which they do result, which therefore we call **substance**.

-
1. *List the ideas necessary to construct an idea of a substance like Helga (a dog).*

Substance/substratum

Our simple ideas represent qualities; to think of a substance like a dog, however, we need to think of these qualities as inhering in or being unified by some underlying substratum (which he sometimes also calls 'pure substance in general'). What is Locke's attitude toward this substratum, and our knowledge of it?

(From II.xiii.19—*Substance and accidents of little use in Philosophy*) They who first ran into the notion of **accidents**, as a sort of real beings that needed something to inhere in, were forced to find out the word **substance** to support them.

Had the poor Indian philosopher (who imagined that the earth also wanted something to bear it up) but thought of this word substance, he needed not to have been at the trouble to find an elephant to support it, and a tortoise to support his elephant: the word substance would have done it effectually. And he that inquired might have taken it for as good an answer from an Indian philosopher—that substance, without knowing what it is, is that which supports the earth, as take it for a sufficient answer and good doctrine from our European philosophers—that substance, without knowing what it is, is that which supports accidents. So that of substance, we have no idea of what it is, but only a confused obscure one of what it does.

(From II.xiii.20—*Sticking on and under-propping*) Whatever a learned man may do here, an intelligent American, who inquired into the nature of things, would scarce take it for a satisfactory account, if, desiring to learn our architecture, he should be told that a pillar is a thing supported by a basis, and a basis something that supported a pillar. Would he not think himself mocked, instead of taught, with such an account as this? ... Were the Latin words, *inherentia* and *substantio*, put into the plain English ones that answer them, and were called **sticking on** and **under-propping**, they would better discover to us the very great clearness there is in the doctrine of substance and accidents, and show of what use they are in deciding of questions in philosophy.

(From II.xxiii.23—*Our obscure Idea of Substance in general*) So that if any one will examine himself concerning his notion of pure substance in general, he will find he has no other idea of it at all, but only a supposition of he knows not what **support** of such qualities which are capable of producing simple ideas in us; which qualities are commonly called accidents. If any one should be asked, what is the subject wherein colour or weight inheres, he would have nothing to say, but the solid extended parts; and if he were demanded, what is it that solidity and extension adhere in, he would not be in a much better case than the Indian before mentioned who, saying that the world was supported by a great elephant, was asked what the elephant rested on; to which his answer was—a great tortoise: but being again pressed to know what gave support to the broad-backed tortoise, replied—**something, he knew not what**.

-
1. It's vital to see that by 'substance' Locke means here 'substratum': that in which properties inhere. This notion is akin to Aristotle's notion of prime matter. Why might one say that Locke has a love/hate relationship with substratum?

Natural kinds

Now that we know how we think about individual substances (e.g., an elephant), we need to know how we can think about kinds or sorts of things. I'm not limited to thinking (or talking) about individual substances; I can make claims that apply to groups or sorts of substances. Locke's abstraction is the mechanism by which we move from purely determinate ideas to general ones.

Keep in mind that Locke has two kinds of fish to fry in this context: the Cartesians, who think that the essence of body is just extension, and the Aristotelians, who think that the world presents itself to us as if it were 'carved at the joints' into innumerable distinct natural kinds. In this context, Locke's role as an 'under-labourer' to science is most in evidence.

(From III.ii.6—*How general Words are made*) ... Words become general by being made the signs of general ideas: and ideas become general, by separating from them the circumstances of time and place, and any other ideas that may determine them to this or that particular existence. By this way of abstraction they are made capable of representing more individuals than one; each of which having in it a conformity to that abstract idea, is (as we call it) of that sort.

(From III.ii.7—*Shown by the way we enlarge our complex ideas from infancy*) ... [T]here is nothing more evident, than that the ideas of the persons children converse with (to instance in them alone) are, like the persons themselves, only particular. The ideas of the nurse and the mother are well framed in their minds; and, like pictures of them there, represent only those individuals. The names they first gave to them are confined to these individuals; and the names of **nurse** and **mamma**, the child uses, determine themselves to those persons. Afterwards, when time and a larger acquaintance have made them observe that there are a great many other things in the world, that in some common agreements of shape, and several other qualities, resemble their father and mother, and those persons they have been used to, they

frame an idea, which they find those many particulars do partake in; and to that they give, with others, the name **man**, for example. And thus they come to have a general name, and a general idea. Wherein they make nothing new; but only leave out of the complex idea they had of Peter and James, Mary and Jane, that which is peculiar to each, and retain only what is common to them all.

(From III.iii.11—*General and Universal are Creatures of the Understanding, and belong not to the Real Existence of things*) [I]t is plain, by what has been said, that **general** and **universal** belong not to the real existence of things; but are the inventions and creatures of the understanding, made by it for its own use, and concern only signs, whether words or ideas. ... [I]deas are general when they are set up as the representatives of many particular things: but universality belongs not to things themselves, which are all of them particular in their existence, even those words and ideas which in their signification are general. When therefore we quit particulars, the generals that rest are only creatures of our own making; their general nature being nothing but the capacity they are put into, by the understanding, of signifying or representing many particulars. For the signification they have is nothing but a relation that, by the mind of man, is added to them.

(From III.iii.13—*They are the Workmanship of the Understanding, but have their Foundation in the Similitude of Things*) I would not here be thought to forget, much less to deny, that Nature, in the production of things, makes several of them alike: there is nothing more obvious, especially in the races of animals, and all things propagated by seed. But yet I think we may say, **the sorting of them under names is the workmanship of the understanding, taking occasion, from the similitude it observes amongst them, to make abstract general ideas**, and set them up in the mind, with names annexed to them, as patterns or forms, (for, in that sense, the word **form** has a very proper signification,) to which as particular things existing are found to agree, so they come to be of that species, have that denomination, or are put into that **class**.

(From III.iii.15—*Several significations of the word Essence*) But since the essences of things are thought by some (and not without reason) to be wholly unknown, it may not be amiss to consider the several significations of the word **essence**.

1. *Real essences*. First, essence may be taken for the very being of anything, whereby it is what it is. And thus the real internal, but generally (in substances) unknown constitution of things, whereon their discoverable qualities depend, may be called their essence. This is the proper original signification of the word, as is evident from the formation of it; essential in its primary notation, signifying properly, being. And in this sense it is still used, when we speak of the essence of **particular** things, without giving them any name.
2. *Nominal essences*. Secondly, the learning and disputes of the schools having been much busied about genus and species, the word essence has almost lost its primary signification: and, instead of the real constitution of things, has been almost wholly applied to the artificial constitution of genus and species. It is true, there is ordinarily supposed a real constitution of the sorts of things; and it is past doubt there must be some real constitution, on which any collection of simple ideas co-existing must depend. But, it being evident that things are ranked under names into sorts or species, only as they agree to certain abstract ideas, to which we have annexed those names, the essence of each **genus**, or sort, comes to be nothing but that abstract idea which the general, or sortal (if I may have leave so to call it from sort, as I do general from genus,) name stands for. And this we shall find to be that which the word essence imports in its most familiar use. These two sorts of essences, I suppose, may not unfitly be termed, the one the **real**, the other **nominal essence**.

(From III.iii.17—*Supposition, that Species are distinguished by their real Essences useless*) [The opinion that considers] real essences as a certain number of forms or moulds, wherein all natural things that exist are cast, and do equally partake, has, I imagine, very much perplexed the knowledge of natural things. The frequent productions of monsters, in all the species of animals, and of changelings, and other strange issues of human birth, carry with them difficulties, not possible to consist with this hypothesis; since it is as impossible that two things partaking exactly of the same real essence should have different properties, as that two figures partaking of the same real essence of a circle should have different properties. But were there no other reason against it, yet the supposition of essences that cannot be known; and the

making of them, nevertheless, to be that which distinguishes the species of things, is so wholly useless and unserviceable to any part of our knowledge, that that alone were sufficient to make us lay it by ...

(From III.vi.6—*Even the real essences of individual substances imply potential sorts*) It is true, I have often mentioned a **real essence**, distinct in substances from those abstract ideas of them, which I call their nominal essence. By this real essence I mean, that real constitution of anything, which is the foundation of all those properties that are combined in, and are constantly found to co-exist with the nominal essence; that particular constitution which everything has within itself, without any relation to anything without it. But essence, even in this sense, **relates to a sort, and supposes a species**. For, being that real constitution on which the properties depend, it necessarily supposes a sort of things, properties belonging only to species, and not to individuals: e.g., supposing the nominal essence of gold to be a body of such a peculiar colour and weight, with malleability and fusibility, the real essence is that constitution of the parts of matter on which these qualities and their union depend; and is also the foundation of its solubility in *aqua regia* and other properties, accompanying that complex idea. Here are essences and properties, but all upon supposition of a sort or general abstract idea, which is considered as immutable; but there is no individual parcel of matter to which any of these qualities are so annexed as to be essential to it or inseparable from it.

(From III.vi.50) For, let us consider, when we affirm that ‘all gold is fixed,’ either it means that fixedness is a part of the definition, i.e., part of the nominal essence the word ‘gold’ stands for; and so this affirmation, ‘all gold is fixed,’ contains nothing but the signification of the term ‘gold’.

Or else it means, that fixedness, not being a part of the definition of ‘gold,’ is a property of that substance itself: in which case it is plain that the word ‘gold’ stands in the place of a substance, having the real essence of a species of things made by nature. In which way of substitution it has so confused and uncertain a signification, that, though this proposition—‘gold is fixed’—be in that sense an affirmation of something real; yet it is a truth will always fail us in its particular application, and so is of no real use or certainty. For let it be ever so true, that all gold, i.e., all that has the real essence of gold, is fixed, what serves this for, whilst we know not, in this sense, **what is or is not gold?** For if we know not the real essence of gold, it is impossible we should know what parcel of matter has that essence, and so whether it be true gold or no.

-
1. In this passage, Locke argues that all general claims about kinds (e.g., ‘gold is fixed’) are either trivial or uncertain. Using the gold example, explain each of these alternatives. In what way can it be taken as trivial? As uncertain?

Body

Now that we have some story about how our ideas of substances are constructed, we need to look at the two main kinds of substance we seem to find in the world: mind and body. Notice Locke’s argument against Descartes’s conflation of body and extension. Locke also replies here to Leibniz’s argument against Newtonian space, namely, that it must be either a substance or an accident, and neither makes much sense.

(From II.xiii.17—*Cohesion of solid parts and Impulse, the primary ideas peculiar to Body*) The primary ideas we have **peculiar to body**, as contradistinguished to spirit, are the **cohesion of solid, and consequently separable, parts**, and a **power of communicating motion by impulse**. These, I think, are the original ideas proper and peculiar to body; for figure is but the consequence of finite extension.

(From II.xiii.11—*Extension and Body not the same*) There are some that would persuade us, that body and extension are the same thing ... If, therefore, they mean by body and extension the same that other people do, viz. By **body** something that is solid and extended, whose parts are separable and movable different ways; and by **extension**, only the space that lies between the extremities of those solid coherent parts, and which is possessed by them, [then] they confound very different ideas one with another; for I appeal to every man’s own thoughts, whether the idea of space be not as distinct

from that of solidity, as it is from the idea of scarlet colour? It is true, solidity cannot exist without extension, neither can scarlet colour exist without extension, but this hinders not, but that they are distinct ideas.

And if it be a reason to prove that spirit is different from body, because thinking includes not the idea of extension in it; the same reason will be as valid, I suppose, to prove that space is not body, because it includes not the idea of solidity in it; **space** and **solidity** being as distinct ideas as **thinking** and **extension**, and as wholly separable in the mind one from another ... Extension includes no solidity, nor resistance to the motion of body, as body does.

(From II.xiii.3—*Space and Extension*) This space, considered barely in length between any two beings, without considering anything else between them, is called **distance**: if considered in length, breadth, and thickness, I think it may be called **capacity**. When considered between the extremities of matter, which fills the capacity of space with something solid, tangible, and moveable, it is properly called **extension**. And so extension is an idea belonging to body only; but space may, as is evident, be considered without it.

(From II.xiii.17—*Substance, which we know not, no proof against space without body*) If it be demanded (as usually it is) whether this space, void of body, be **substance** or **accident**, I shall readily answer I know not; nor shall be ashamed to own my ignorance, till they that ask show me a clear distinct idea of substance.

Mind

Locke here sets out the constituent ideas that make up the complex idea of the mind. He also launches an attack against Descartes's claim that thought is the essence of the soul. Most famously, he denies that we can be sure that what thinks in us in an immaterial substance.

(From II.xxiii.18. *Thinking and motivity*) The ideas we have belonging and **peculiar to spirit**, are **thinking**, and **will**, or a **power of putting body into motion by thought, and, which is consequent to it, liberty**. For, as body cannot but communicate its motion by impulse to another body, which it meets with at rest, so the mind can put bodies into motion, or forbear to do so, as it pleases. The ideas of **existence**, **duration**, and **mobility**, are common to them both.

(From II.i.10—*The Soul thinks not always; for this wants Proofs*) ... I confess myself to have one of those dull souls, that doth not perceive itself always to contemplate ideas; nor can conceive it any more necessary for the soul always to think, than for the body always to move: the perception of ideas being (as I conceive) to the soul, what motion is to the body; not its essence, but one of its operations. And therefore, though thinking be supposed never so much the proper action of the soul, yet it is not necessary to suppose that it should be always thinking, always in action. ... To say that actual thinking is essential to the soul, and inseparable from it, is to beg what is in question, and not to prove it by reason; which is necessary to be done, if it be not a self-evident proposition. But whether this, "That the soul always thinks," be a self-evident proposition, that everybody assents to at first hearing, I appeal to mankind. It is doubted whether I thought at all last night or no. The question being about a matter of fact, it is begging it to bring, as a proof for it, an hypothesis, which is the very thing in dispute: by which way one may prove anything ...

But men in love with their opinions may not only suppose what is in question, but allege wrong matter of fact. How else could any one make it an inference of mine, that a thing is not, because we are not sensible of it in our sleep? I do not say there is no **soul** in a man, because he is not sensible of it in his sleep; but I do say, he cannot **think** at any time, waking or sleeping, without being sensible of it. Our being sensible of it is not necessary to anything but to our thoughts; and to them it is; and to them it always will be necessary, till we can think without being conscious of it.

1. *Locke begins with an argument from experience. How does it work? We can think of it as a reductio ad absurdum:*

Premise 1: The soul's essence is to think (Descartes's view)

Premise 2: Given 1, it follows that the soul _____ (since this is part of what it is to be an essential property)

Premise 3: But experience shows _____.

Conclusion: _____.

Now, Locke realizes that the Cartesian will not leave things at that; he will insist that minds think even during sleep, though they do not remember it. Locke thinks this move has a heavy price:

(From II.i.11—*It is not always conscious of [thinking]*) I grant that the soul, in a waking man, is never without thought, because it is the condition of being awake. But whether sleeping without dreaming be not an affection of the whole man, mind as well as body, may be worth a waking man's consideration; it being hard to conceive that anything should think and not be conscious of it. If the soul doth think in a sleeping man without being conscious of it, I ask whether, during such thinking, it has any pleasure or pain, or be capable of happiness or misery? I am sure the man is not; no more than the bed or earth he lies on. For to be happy or miserable without being conscious of it, seems to me utterly inconsistent and impossible. Or if it be possible that the **soul** can, whilst the body is sleeping, have its thinking, enjoyments, and concerns, its pleasures or pain, apart, which the **man** is not conscious of nor partakes in—it is certain that Socrates asleep and Socrates awake is not the same person; but his soul when he sleeps, and Socrates the man, consisting of body and soul, when he is waking, are two persons: since waking Socrates has no knowledge of, or concernment for that happiness or misery of his soul, which it enjoys alone by itself whilst he sleeps, without perceiving anything of it; no more than he has for the happiness or misery of a man in the Indies, whom he knows not. For, if we take wholly away all consciousness of our actions and sensations, especially of pleasure and pain, and the concernment that accompanies it, it will be hard to know wherein to place personal identity.

1. What price does Locke think Descartes must pay, in order to hang on to his claim that the soul always thinks?

(From II.xxiii.5—*As clear an idea of spiritual substance as of corporeal substance*) The same thing happens concerning the operations of the mind, viz. thinking, reasoning, fearing, &c., which we concluding not to subsist of themselves, nor apprehending how they can belong to body, or be produced by it, we are apt to think these the actions of some other **substance**, which we call **spirit**; whereby yet it is evident that, having no other idea or notion of matter, but something wherein those many sensible qualities which affect our senses do subsist; by supposing a substance wherein thinking, knowing, doubting, and a power of moving, &c., do subsist, we have as clear a notion of the substance of spirit, as we have of body; the one being supposed to be (without knowing what it is) the **substratum** to those simple ideas we have from without; and the other supposed (with a like ignorance of what it is) to be the **substratum** to those operations we experiment in ourselves within. It is plain then, that the idea of **corporeal substance** in matter is as remote from our conceptions and apprehensions, as that of **spiritual substance**, or spirit: and therefore, from our not having, any notion of the substance of spirit, we can no more conclude its non-existence, than we can, for the same reason, deny the existence of body...

(From II.xxiii.16—*No Idea of abstract Substance either in Body or Spirit*) By the complex idea of extended, figured, coloured, and all other sensible qualities, which is all that we know of it, we are as far from the idea of the substance of body, as if we knew nothing at all: nor after all the acquaintance and familiarity which we imagine we have with matter, and the many qualities men assure themselves they perceive and know in bodies, will it perhaps upon examination be found, that they have any more or clearer primary ideas belonging to body, than they have belonging to immaterial spirit.

(From II.xxiii.23—*Cohesion of solid Parts in Body as hard to be conceived as thinking in a Soul*) [I]f [a man] says he knows not how he thinks, I answer, Neither knows he how he is extended, how the solid parts of body are united or cohere together to make extension. For though the pressure of the particles of air may account for the cohesion of several parts of matter that are grosser than the particles of air, and have pores less than the corpuscles of air, yet the weight or pressure of the air will not explain, nor can be a cause of the coherence of the particles of air themselves. And if the pressure of the aether, or any subtler matter than the air, may unite, and hold fast together, the parts of a particle of air, as well

as other bodies, yet it cannot make bonds for **itself**, and hold together the parts that make up every the least corpuscle of that **materia subtilis**.

(From II.xxiii.28—*Communication of Motion by Impulse, or by Thought, equally unintelligible*) Another idea we have of body is, **the power of communication of motion by impulse**; and of our souls, **the power of exciting motion by thought**. These ideas, the one of body, the other of our minds, every day's experience clearly furnishes us with: but if here again we inquire how this is done, we are equally in the dark. For, in the communication of motion by impulse, wherein as much motion is lost to one body as is got to the other, which is the ordinaryest case, we can have no other conception, but of the passing of motion out of one body into another; which, I think, is as obscure and inconceivable as how our minds move or stop our bodies by thought, which we every moment find they do. We have by daily experience clear evidence of motion produced both by impulse and by thought; but the manner how, hardly comes within our comprehension: we are equally at a loss in both. So that, however we consider motion, and its communication, either from body or spirit, the idea which belongs to spirit is at least as clear as that which belongs to body. And if we consider the active power of moving, or, as I may call it, motivity, it is much clearer in spirit than body; since two bodies, placed by one another at rest, will never afford us the idea of a power in the one to move the other, but by a borrowed motion.

...

1. Locke is here raising the problem of transference: how can one body give its motion to another? See [Aquinas, Summa Contra Gentiles Chapter Sixty-nine, Section Seven](#), and [Descartes's Principles \(Part II, sections xxiv-v\)](#). How would each react to what Locke says here?

(From IV.iii.6—*Our Knowledge, therefore narrower than our Ideas*) From all which it is evident, that the **extent of our knowledge** comes not only short of the reality of things, but even of the extent of our own ideas. Though our knowledge be limited to our ideas, and cannot exceed them either in extent or perfection; ... Yet it would be well with us if our knowledge were but as large as our ideas, and there were not many doubts and inquiries **concerning the ideas** we **have**, whereof we are not, nor I believe ever shall be in this world resolved. Nevertheless, I do not question but that human knowledge, under the present circumstances of our beings and constitutions, may be carried much further than it has hitherto been, if men would sincerely, and with freedom of mind, employ all that industry and labour of thought, in improving the means of discovering truth, which they do for the colouring or support of falsehood, to maintain a system, interest, or party they are once engaged in.

... We have the ideas of a **square**, a **circle**, and **equality**; and yet, perhaps, shall never be able to find a circle equal to a square, and certainly know that it is so. We have the ideas of **matter** and **thinking**, but possibly shall never be able to know whether [any mere material being] thinks or no; it being impossible for us, by the contemplation of our own ideas, without revelation, to discover whether Omnipotency has not given to some systems of matter, fitly disposed, a power to perceive and think, or else joined and fixed to matter, so disposed, a thinking immaterial substance: it being, in respect of our notions, not much more remote from our comprehension to conceive that **God** can, if he pleases, superadd to matter a **faculty of thinking**, than that he should superadd to it **another substance with a faculty of thinking**; since we know not wherein thinking consists, nor to what sort of substances the Almighty has been pleased to give that power, which cannot be in any created being, but merely by the good pleasure and bounty of the Creator. For I see no contradiction in it, that the first Eternal thinking Being, or Omnipotent Spirit, should, if he pleased, give to certain systems of created senseless matter, put together as he thinks fit, some degrees of sense, perception, and thought: though, as I think I have proved, lib. iv. Ch. 10, Section 14, &c., it is no less than a contradiction to suppose matter (which is evidently in its own nature void of sense and thought) should be that Eternal first-thinking Being. What certainty of knowledge can any one have, that some perceptions, such as, e.g., pleasure and pain, should not be in some bodies themselves, after a certain manner modified and moved, as well as that they should be in an immaterial substance, upon the motion of the parts of body: Body, as far as we can conceive, being able only to strike and affect

body, and motion, according to the utmost reach of our ideas, being able to produce nothing but motion; so that when we allow it to produce pleasure or pain, or the idea of a colour or sound, we are fain to quit our reason, go beyond our ideas, and attribute it wholly to the good pleasure of our Maker. For, since we must allow He has annexed effects to motion which we can no way conceive motion able to produce, what reason have we to conclude that He could not order them as well to be produced in a subject we cannot conceive capable of them, as well as in a subject we cannot conceive the motion of matter can any way operate upon? I say not this, that I would any way lessen the belief of the soul's immateriality: I am not here speaking of probability, but knowledge, and I think not only that it becomes the modesty of philosophy not to pronounce magisterially, where we want that evidence that can produce knowledge; but also, that it is of use to us to discern how far our knowledge does reach; for the state we are at present in, not being that of vision, we must in many things content ourselves with faith and probability: and in the present question, about the Immateriality of the Soul, if our faculties cannot arrive at demonstrative certainty, we need not think it strange. All the great ends of morality and religion are well enough secured, without philosophical proofs of the soul's immateriality ... since it is evident, that he who made us at the beginning to subsist here, sensible intelligent beings, and for several years continued us in such a state, can and will restore us to the like state of sensibility in another world, and make us capable there to receive the retribution he has designed to men, according to their doings in this life.

And therefore it is not of such mighty necessity to determine one way or the other, as some, over-zealous for or against the immateriality of the soul, have been forward to make the world believe. Who, either on the one side, indulging too much their thoughts immersed altogether in matter, can allow no existence to what is not material: or who, on the other side, finding not **cogitation** within the natural powers of matter, examined over and over again by the utmost intention of mind, have the confidence to conclude—that Omnipotency itself cannot give perception and thought to a substance which has the modification of solidity. He that considers how hardly sensation is, in our thoughts, reconcilable to extended matter; or existence to anything that has no extension at all, will confess that he is very far from certainly knowing what his soul is. It is a point which seems to me to be put out of the reach of our knowledge: and he who will give himself leave to consider freely, and look into the dark and intricate part of each hypothesis, will scarce find his reason able to determine him fixedly for or against the soul's materiality. Since, on which side soever he views it, either as an **unextended substance**, or as a **thinking extended matter**, the difficulty to conceive either will, whilst either alone is in his thoughts, still drive him to the contrary side. ...

It is past controversy, that we have in us **something** that thinks; our very doubts about what it is, confirm the certainty of its being, though we must content ourselves in the ignorance of what **kind** of being it is: and it is in vain to go about to be sceptical in this, as it is unreasonable in most other cases to be positive against the being of anything, because we cannot comprehend its nature. For I would fain know what substance exists, that has not something in it which manifestly baffles our understandings ...

Personal Identity

Can Locke make good on his claim that 'all the great ends of religion and morality' can be served, even without a proof of the soul's immortality? Both religion and morality require, Locke thinks, the certainty of post-mortem rewards and harms. But how can we make sense of the self surviving the death of the body, if we cannot show that the self is immaterial?

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

(From II.xxvii.4) [L]et us suppose an atom, i.e., a continued body under one immutable superficies, existing in a

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

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

(From II.xxvii.6—*Identity of Animals*) The case is not so much different in **brutes** but that any one may hence see what makes an animal and continues it the same. Something we have like this in machines, and may serve to illustrate it. For example, what is a watch? it is plain it is nothing but a fit organization or construction of parts to a certain end, which, when a sufficient force is added to it, it is capable to attain. If we would suppose this machine one continued body, all whose organized parts were repaired, increased, or diminished by a constant addition or separation of insensible parts, with one common life, we should have something very much like the body of an animal ...

(From II.xxvii.7—*The Identity of Man*) This also shows wherein the identity of the same **man** consists; viz. in nothing but a participation of the same continued life, by constantly fleeting particles of matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized body.

(From II.xxvii.11—*Personal Identity*) This being premised, to find wherein personal identity consists, we must consider what **person** stands for; which, I think, is a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider itself as itself, the same thinking thing, in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness which is inseparable from thinking, and, as it seems to me, essential to it: it being impossible for any one to perceive without **perceiving** that he does perceive. When we see, hear, smell, taste, feel, meditate, or will anything, we know that we do so. Thus it is always as to our present sensations and perceptions: and by this every one is to himself that which he calls **self**—it not being considered, in this case, whether the same self be continued in the same or divers substances. For, since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and it is that which makes every one to be what he calls self, and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists personal identity, i.e., the sameness of a rational being: and as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past action or thought, so far reaches the identity of that person; it is the same self now it was then; and it is by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that action was done.

(From II.xxvii.12—*Consciousness makes personal Identity*) But it is further inquired, whether it be the same identical substance. This few would think they had reason to doubt of, if these perceptions, with their consciousness, always

remained present in the mind, whereby the same thinking thing would be always consciously present, and, as would be thought, evidently the same to itself. But that which seems to make the difficulty is this, that this consciousness being interrupted always by forgetfulness, there being no moment of our lives wherein we have the whole train of all our past actions before our eyes in one view, but even the best memories losing the sight of one part whilst they are viewing another; and we sometimes, and that the greatest part of our lives, not reflecting on our past selves, being intent on our present thoughts, and in sound sleep having no thoughts at all, or at least none with that consciousness which remarks our waking thoughts—I say, in all these cases, our consciousness being interrupted, and we losing the sight of our past selves, doubts are raised whether we are the same thinking thing, i.e., the same **substance** or no. Which, however reasonable or unreasonable, concerns not **personal** identity at all. ... For as far as any intelligent being *can* repeat the idea of any past action with the same consciousness it had of it at first, and with the same consciousness it has of any present action; so far it is the same personal self. For it is by the consciousness it has of its present thoughts and actions, that it is **self to itself** now, and so will be the same self, as far as the same consciousness can extend to actions past or to come; and would be by distance of time, or change of substance, no more two persons, than a man be two men by wearing other clothes to-day than he did yesterday, with a long or a short sleep between: the same consciousness uniting those distant actions into the same person, whatever substances contributed to their production.

(From II.xxvii.14—*Personality in Change of Substance*) But the question is, Whether if the same substance which thinks be changed, it can be the same person; or, remaining the same, it can be different persons? And to this I answer: First, This can be no question at all to those who place thought in a purely material animal constitution, void of an immaterial substance. For, whether their supposition be true or no, it is plain they conceive personal identity preserved in something else than identity of substance; as animal identity is preserved in identity of life, and not of substance. And therefore those who place thinking in an immaterial substance only, before they can come to deal with these men, must show why personal identity cannot be preserved in the change of immaterial substances, or variety of particular immaterial substances, as well as animal identity is preserved in the change of material substances, or variety of particular bodies ...

(From II.xxvii.15—*Whether in Change of thinking Substances there can be one Person*) [I]t must be allowed, that, if the same consciousness (which, as has been shown, is quite a different thing from the same numerical figure or motion in body) can be transferred from one thinking substance to another, it will be possible that two thinking substances may make but one person. For the same consciousness being preserved, whether in the same or different substances, the personal identity is preserved.

(From II.xxvii.17—*The body, as well as the soul, goes to the making of a Man*) And thus may we be able, without any difficulty, to conceive the same person at the resurrection, though in a body not exactly in make or parts the same which he had here, the same consciousness going along with the soul that inhabits it. But yet the soul alone, in the change of bodies, would scarce to any one but to him that makes the soul the man, be enough to make the same man. For should the soul of a prince, carrying with it the consciousness of the prince's past life, enter and inform the body of a cobbler, as soon as deserted by his own soul, every one sees he would be the same **person** with the prince, accountable only for the prince's actions: but who would say it was the same **man**?

(From II.xxvii.19—*Self depends on Consciousness, not on Substance*) **Self** is that conscious thinking thing—whatever substance made up of (whether spiritual or material, simple or compounded, it matters not)—which is sensible or conscious of pleasure and pain, capable of happiness or misery, and so is concerned for itself, as far as that consciousness extends.

(From II.xxvii.20—*Persons, not Substances, the Objects of Reward and Punishment*) In this personal identity is founded all the right and justice of reward and punishment; happiness and misery being that for which every one is concerned for **himself**, and not mattering what becomes of any **substance**, not joined to, or affected with that consciousness.

(From II.xxvii.21—*Which shows wherein Personal identity consists*) This may show us wherein personal identity consists: not in the identity of substance, but, as I have said, in the identity of consciousness ... if Socrates waking and sleeping do not partake of the same consciousness, Socrates waking and sleeping is not the same person. And to punish Socrates waking for what sleeping Socrates thought, and waking Socrates was never conscious of, would be no more of right, than to punish one twin for what his brother-twin did, whereof he knew nothing, because their outsides were so like, that they could not be distinguished; for such twins have been seen.

(From II.xxvii.24—*Objection*) But is not a man drunk and sober the same person? Why else is he punished for the fact he commits when drunk, though he be never afterwards conscious of it? Just as much the same person as a man that walks, and does other things in his sleep, is the same person, and is answerable for any mischief he shall do in it. Human laws punish both, with a justice suitable to *their* way of knowledge; because, in these cases, they cannot distinguish certainly what is real, what counterfeit: and so the ignorance in drunkenness or sleep is not admitted as a plea. But in the great day, wherein the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, it may be reasonable to think, no one shall be made to answer for what he knows nothing of; but shall receive his doom, his conscience accusing or excusing him.

-
1. *What is Locke's sortal relativity thesis?*
 2. *Given this, what makes something the same:*
 - 2.1 Atom over time?
 - 2.2 Mass of atoms?
 - 2.3 Plant?
 - 2.4 Animal?
 - 2.5 Man?
 - 2.6 Person?
 3. *What does Descartes think accounts for personal identity over time?*
 4. *What does Locke think is wrong with Descartes's answer?*

The Limits of Knowledge

It now makes sense to turn to Locke's official discussion of the limits of knowledge. Keep in mind that the two orders of classification Locke introduces (manners or degrees of knowledge and the objects known) cut across each other. I've chosen to frame the discussion in terms of the objects of knowledge: identity (known by intuition), relation (by demonstration), co-existence, and real existence (by sensation).

(From IV.i.1—*Our Knowledge conversant about our Ideas only*) Since the mind, in all its thoughts and reasonings, hath no other immediate object but its own ideas, which it alone does or can contemplate, it is evident that our knowledge is only conversant about them.

(From IV.i.2—*Knowledge is the perception of the agreement or disagreement of two ideas*) **Knowledge** then seems to me to be nothing but **the perception of the connexion of and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our ideas**. In this alone it consists. Where this perception is, there is knowledge, and where it is not, there, though we may fancy, guess, or believe, yet we always come short of knowledge. For when we know that white is not black, what do we else but perceive, that these two ideas do not agree? when we possess ourselves with the utmost security of the demonstration, that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right ones, what do we more but perceive, that equality to two right ones does necessarily agree to, and is inseparable from, the three angles of a triangle?

(From IV.i.3—*This Agreement or Disagreement may be any of four sorts*) But to understand a little more distinctly wherein this agreement or disagreement consists, I think we may reduce it all to these four sorts: i. **identity**, or **diversity**. ii. **relation**. iii. **co-existence**, or **necessary connexion**. iv. **real existence**.

(From IV.i.4—*First, of Identity, or Diversity in ideas*) **First**, as to the first sort of agreement or disagreement, viz. **identity** or **diversity**. It is the first act of the mind, when it has any sentiments or ideas at all, to perceive its ideas; and so far as it perceives them, to know each what it is, and thereby also to perceive their difference, and that one is not another.

(From IV.i.5—*Secondly, of abstract Relations between ideas*) **Secondly**, the next sort of agreement or disagreement the

mind perceives in any of its ideas may, I think, be called **relative**, and is nothing but the perception of the **relation** between any two ideas, of what kind soever, whether substances, modes, or any other.

(From IV.i.6—*Thirdly, of their necessary Co-existence in Substances*) The **third** sort of agreement or disagreement to be found in our ideas, which the perception of the mind is employed about, is **co-existence** or **non-co-existence** in the **same subject**; and this belongs particularly to substances. Thus when we pronounce concerning gold, that it is fixed, our knowledge of this truth amounts to no more but this, that fixedness, or a power to remain in the fire unconsumed, is an idea that always accompanies and is joined with that particular sort of yellowness, weight, fusibility, malleableness, and solubility in **aqua regia**, which make our complex idea signified by the word 'gold'.

(From IV.iii.9—*Of their Co-existence, extends only a very little way*) [A]s to the ... agreement or disagreement of our ideas in **co-existence**, in this our knowledge is very short; though in this consists the greatest and most material part of our knowledge concerning substances. For our ideas of the species of substances being, as I have showed, nothing but certain collections of simple ideas united in one subject, and so co-existing together; e.g., our idea of flame is a body hot, luminous, and moving upward; of gold, a body heavy to a certain degree, yellow, malleable, and fusible: for these, or some such complex ideas as these, in men's minds, do these two names of the different substances, flame and gold, stand for. When we would know anything further concerning these, or any other sort of substances, what do we inquire, but what other qualities or powers these substances have or have not? which is nothing else but to know what other simple ideas do, or do not co-exist with those that make up that complex idea?

(From IV.iii.10—*Because the Connexion between simple Ideas in substances is for the most part unknown*) This, how weighty and considerable a part soever of human science, is yet very narrow, and scarce any at all. The reason whereof is, that the simple ideas whereof our complex ideas of substances are made up are, for the most part, such as carry with them, in their own nature, no visible necessary connexion or inconsistency with any other simple ideas, whose co-existence with them we would inform ourselves about.

(From IV.iii.25) If a great, nay, far the greatest part of the several ranks of bodies in the universe escape our notice by their remoteness, there are others that are no less concealed from us by their minuteness. These **insensible corpuscles**, being the active parts of matter, and the great instruments of nature, on which depend not only all their secondary qualities, but also most of their natural operations, our want of precise distinct ideas of their primary qualities keeps us in an incurable ignorance of what we desire to know about them.

I doubt not but if we could discover the figure, size, texture, and motion of the minute constituent parts of any two bodies, we should know without trial several of their operations one upon another; as we do now the properties of a square or a triangle. Did we know the mechanical affections of the particles of rhubarb, hemlock, opium, and a man, as a watchmaker does those of a watch, whereby it performs its operations; and of a file, which by rubbing on them will alter the figure of any of the wheels; we should be able to tell beforehand that rhubarb will purge, hemlock kill, and opium make a man sleep: as well as a watchmaker can, that a little piece of paper laid on the balance will keep the watch from going till it be removed; or that, some small part of it being rubbed by a file, the machine would quite lose its motion, and the watch go no more. The dissolving of silver in **aqua fortis**, and gold in **aqua regia**, and not **vice versa**, would be then perhaps no more difficult to know than it is to a smith to understand why the turning of one key will open a lock, and not the turning of another. But whilst we are destitute of senses acute enough to discover the minute particles of bodies, and to give us ideas of their mechanical affections, we must be content to be ignorant of their properties and ways of operation; nor can we be assured about them any further than some few trials we make are able to reach. But whether they will succeed again another time, we cannot be certain. This hinders our certain knowledge of universal truths concerning natural bodies: and our reason carries us herein very little beyond particular matter of fact.

(From IV.vi.9—*No discoverable necessary connexion between nominal essence gold, and other simple ideas*) As there is no discoverable connexion between fixedness and the colour, weight, and other simple ideas of that nominal essence of gold; so, if we make our complex idea of gold, a body yellow, fusible, ductile, weighty, and fixed, we shall be at the same uncertainty concerning solubility in **aqua regia**, and for the same reason. Since we can never, from consideration of the ideas themselves, with certainty affirm or deny of a body whose complex idea is made up of yellow, very weighty,

ductile, fusible, and fixed, that it is soluble in **aqua regia**: and so on of the rest of its qualities. I would gladly meet with one general affirmation concerning any will, no doubt, be presently objected, is not this an universal proposition, “**all gold is malleable**”? to which I answer, it is a very complex idea the word ‘gold’ stands for. But then here is nothing affirmed of gold, but that that sound stands for an idea in which malleableness is contained: and such a sort of truth and certainty as this it is, to say a centaur is four-footed. But if malleableness make not a part of the specific essence the name of ‘gold’ stands for, it is plain, “**all gold is malleable**”, is not a certain proposition. Because, let the complex idea of *gold* be made up of whichever of its other qualities you please, malleableness will not appear to depend on that complex idea, nor follow from any simple one contained in it: the connexion that malleableness has (if it has any) with those other qualities being only by the intervention of the real constitution of its insensible parts; which, since we know not, it is impossible we should perceive that connexion, unless we could discover that which ties them together.

(From IV.i.7—*Fourthly, of real Existence agreeing to any idea*) The fourth and last sort is that of **actual real existence** agreeing to any idea.

(From IV.ii.1—*Of the degrees, or differences in clearness, of our Knowledge*)

1. *Intuitive*: The different clearness of our knowledge seems to me to lie in the different way of perception the mind has of the agreement or disagreement of any of its ideas. For if we will reflect on our own ways of thinking, we will find, that sometimes the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of two ideas **immediately by themselves**, without the intervention of any other: and this I think we may call **intuitive knowledge**.

(From IV.ii.2)

1. *Demonstrative*: The next degree of knowledge is, where the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of any ideas, but not immediately. Though wherever the mind perceives the agreement or disagreement of any of its ideas, there be certain knowledge; yet it does not always happen, that the mind sees that agreement or disagreement, which there is between them, even where it is discoverable; and in that case remains in ignorance, and at most gets no further than a probable conjecture. ... In this case then, when the mind cannot so bring its ideas together as by their immediate comparison, and as it were juxta-position or application one to another, to perceive their agreement or disagreement, it is fain, by **the intervention of other ideas**, (one or more, as it happens) to discover the agreement or disagreement which it searches; and this is that which we call **reasoning**. ...

(From IV.ii.14)

1. Sensitive knowledge of the particular existence of finite beings without us. These two, viz. intuition and demonstration, are the degrees of our **knowledge**; whatever comes short of one of these, with what assurance soever embraced, is but **faith** or **opinion**, but not knowledge, at least in all general truths. There is, indeed, another perception of the mind, employed about **the particular existence of finite beings without us**, which, going beyond bare probability, and yet not reaching perfectly to either of the foregoing degrees of certainty, passes under the name of **knowledge**. There can be nothing more certain than that the idea we receive from an external object is in our minds: this is intuitive knowledge. But whether there be anything more than barely that idea in our minds; whether we can thence certainly infer the existence of anything without us, which corresponds to that idea, is that whereof some men think there may be a question made; because men may have such ideas in their minds, when no such thing exists, no such object affects their senses. But yet here I think we are provided with an evidence that puts us past doubting. For I

ask any one, whether he be not invincibly conscious to himself of a different perception, when he looks on the sun by day, and thinks on it by night; when he actually tastes wormwood, or smells a rose, or only thinks on that savour or odour? We as plainly find the difference there is between any idea revived in our minds by our own memory, and actually coming into our minds by our senses, as we do between any two distinct ideas. If any one say, a dream may do the same thing, and all these ideas may be produced, in us without any external objects; he may please to dream that I make him this answer:

1. That it is no great matter, whether I remove his scruple or no: where all is but dream, reasoning and arguments are of no use, truth and knowledge nothing.
2. That I believe he will allow a very manifest difference between dreaming of being in the fire, and being actually in it. But yet if he be resolved to appear so sceptical as to maintain, that what I call being actually in the fire is nothing but a dream; and that we cannot thereby certainly know, that any such thing as fire actually exists without us: I answer, that we certainly find that pleasure or pain follows upon the application of certain objects to us, whose existence we perceive, or dream that we perceive, by our senses; this certainty is as great as our happiness or misery, beyond which we have no concernment to know or to be. So that, I think, we may add to the two former sorts of knowledge this also, of the existence of particular external objects, by that perception and consciousness we have of the actual entrance of ideas from them, and allow these three degrees of knowledge, viz. **intuitive**, **demonstrative**, and **sensitive**; in each of which there are different degrees and ways of evidence and certainty.

(From IV.iv.1—*Objection: “Knowledge placed in our ideas may be all unreal or chimerical”*) I doubt not but my reader, by this time, may be apt to think that I have been all this while only building a castle in the air; and be ready to say to me: To what purpose all this stir? knowledge, say you, is only the perception of the agreement or disagreement of our own ideas: but who knows what those ideas may be? Is there anything so extravagant as the imaginations of men’s brains? where is the head that has no chimeras in it? ... If it be true, that all knowledge lies only in the perception of the agreement or disagreement of our own ideas, the visions of an enthusiast and the reasonings of a sober man will be equally certain.

(From IV.iv.2—*Answer Not so, where Ideas agree with Things*) To which I answer, That if our knowledge of our ideas terminate in them, and reach no further, where there is something further intended, our most serious thoughts will be of little more use than the reveries of a crazy brain. ... But I hope, before I have done, to make it evident, that this way of certainty, by the knowledge of our own ideas, goes a little further than bare imagination: and I believe it will appear that all the certainty of general truths a man has lies in nothing else.

(From IV.iv.3—*But what shall be the criterion of this agreement?*) It is evident the mind knows not things immediately, but only by the intervention of the ideas it has of them. Our knowledge, therefore, is real only so far as there is a **conformity** between our ideas and the reality of things. But what shall be here the criterion? How shall the mind, when it perceives nothing but its own ideas, know that they agree with things themselves? this, though it seems not to want difficulty, yet, I think, there be two sorts of ideas that we may be assured agree with things.

(From IV.iv.4—*As, first all simple ideas are really conformed to things*) **First**, the first are simple ideas, which since the mind, as has been showed, can by no means make to itself, must necessarily be the product of things operating on the mind, in a natural way, and producing therein those perceptions which by the Wisdom and Will of our Maker they are ordained and adapted to. From whence it follows, that simple ideas are not fictions of our fancies, but the natural and regular productions of things without us, really operating upon us; and so carry with them all the conformity which is intended; or which our state requires: for they represent to us things under those appearances which they are fitted to produce in us: whereby we are enabled to distinguish the sorts of particular substances, to discern the states they are in, and so to take them for our necessities, and apply them to our uses. Thus the idea of whiteness, or bitterness, as it is in the mind, exactly answering that power which is in any body to produce it there, has all the real conformity it can or ought to have, with things without us. And this conformity between our simple ideas and the existence of things, is sufficient for real knowledge.

-
1. What is the difference between knowledge and 'real' knowledge?
 2. How can we know whether we have 'real' knowledge or not?

God

Scholars disagree on just how Locke means to respond to skepticism. But it certainly looks as if he is invoking God at some crucial points in his defense of the reality of knowledge. What follows is Locke's sketch of his argument for God's existence; the details are to be found later in IV.x.

(From IV.x.1—*We are capable of knowing certainly that there is a God*) Though God has given us no innate ideas of himself; though he has stamped no original characters on our minds, wherein we may read his being; yet having furnished us with those faculties our minds are endowed with, he hath not left himself without witness ...

(From IV.x.2—*For Man knows that he himself exists*) I think it is beyond question, that man has a clear idea of his own being; he knows certainly he exists, and that he is something. He that can doubt whether he be anything or no, I speak not to ... This, then, I think I may take for a truth, which every one's certain knowledge assures him of, beyond the liberty of doubting, viz. that he is **something that actually exists**.

(From IV.x.3—*He knows also that Nothing cannot produce a Being; therefore something must have existed from Eternity*) In the next place, man knows, by an intuitive certainty, that bare **nothing can no more produce any real being, than it can be equal to two right angles**. [I]t is [thus] an evident demonstration, that **from eternity there has been something**; since what was not from eternity had a beginning; and what had a beginning must be produced by something else.

(From IV.x.4—*And that eternal being must be most powerful*) Next, it is evident, that what had its being and beginning from another, must also have all that which is in and belongs to its being from another too. All the powers it has must be owing to and received from the same source. This eternal source, then, of all being must also be the source and original of all power; and so **this eternal being must be also the most powerful**.

(From IV.x.5—*And most knowing*) Again, a man finds in **himself** perception and knowledge. We have then got one step further; and we are certain now that there is not only some being, but some knowing, intelligent being in the world. There was a time, then, when there was no knowing being, and when knowledge began to be; or else there has been also a **knowing being from eternity**. If it be said, there was a time when no being had any knowledge, when that eternal being was void of all understanding; I reply, that then it was impossible there should ever have been any knowledge: it being as impossible that things wholly void of knowledge, and operating blindly, and without any perception, should produce a knowing being, as it is impossible that a triangle should make itself three angles bigger than two right ones. For it is as repugnant to the idea of senseless matter, that it should put into itself sense, perception, and knowledge, as it is repugnant to the idea of a triangle, that it should put into itself greater angles than two right ones.

(From IV.x.6—*And therefore God*) Thus, from the consideration of ourselves, and what we infallibly find in our own constitutions, our reason leads us to the knowledge of this certain and evident truth—**that there is an eternal, most powerful, and most knowing being**; which whether any one will please to call God, it matters not.

1. Locke's argument for God's existence, as presented in these passages, looks pretty weak. What's wrong with it?