

SUPPLEMENTAL READING FOR QUESTION 2, 2nd ESSAY ASSIGNMENT

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Perception

Book II

§ 4. How often may a Man observe in himself, that whilst his Mind is intently employ'd in the contemplation of some Objects; and curiously surveying some *Ideas* that are there, it takes no notice of impressions of sounding Bodies, made upon the Organ of Hearing, with the same alteration, that uses to be for the producing the *Idea* of a Sound? A sufficient impulse there may be on the Organ; but it not reaching the observation of the Mind, there follows no perception. And though the motion, that uses to produce the *Idea* of Sound, be made in the Ear, yet no sound is heard. Want of Sensation in this case, is not through any defect in the Organ, or that the Man's Ears are less affected, than at other times, when he does hear: but that which uses to produce the *Idea*, though conveyed in by the usual Organ, not being taken notice of in the Understanding, and so imprinting no *Idea* on the Mind, there follows no Sensation.
15 So that where-ever there is Sense, or Perception, there some *Idea* is actually produced, and present in the Understanding.

§ 5. Therefore I doubt not but *Children*, by the exercise of their Senses about Objects, that affect them in the *Womb*, receive some few *Ideas*, before they are born, as the unavoidable effects, either of the Bodies that environ them, or else of those Wants or Diseases they suffer; amongst which, (if one may conjecture concerning things not very capable of examination) I think the *Ideas* of Hunger and Warmth are two: which probably are some of the first that *Children* have, and which they scarce ever part with again.

§ 6. But though it be reasonable to imagine, that *Children* receive some *Ideas* before they come into the World, yet these simple *Ideas* are far from those innate Principles, which some contend for, and we above have rejected. These here mentioned, being the effects of Sensation, are only from some Affections of the Body, which happen to them there, and so depend on something exterior to the Mind; no otherwise differing in their manner of production from other *Ideas* derived from Sense, but only in the precedency of Time: Whereas those innate Principles are supposed to be of quite another nature; not coming into the Mind by any accidental alterations in, or operations on the Body; but, as it were, original Characters

§§ 5, 6. *Children*, tho' they have *Ideas*, in the *Womb*, have none innate.

(4-5) made . . . alteration] 2-5 | which are brought in, though the same alteration be made upon the Organ of Hearing 1 (6) a) 1-4; om. 5 (11) the Man's] 2-5 | his 1 (14) and . . . Mind,] add. 2-5 (33) of quite] 1-4 | quite of 5 (34) any] 2-5 | the 1

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impressed upon it, in the very first moment of its Being and Constitution.

§ 7. As there are some *Ideas*, which we may reasonably suppose may be introduced into the Minds of Children in the Womb, subservient to the necessities of their Life, and Being there: So after they are born, those *Ideas* are the earliest imprinted, which happen to be the sensible Qualities, which first occur to them; amongst which, Light is not the least considerable, nor of the weakest efficacy. And how covetous the Mind is, to be furnished with all such *Ideas*, as have no pain accompanying them, may be a little guess'd, by what is observable in Children new-born, who always turn their Eyes to that part, from whence the Light comes, lay them how you please. But the *Ideas* that are most familiar at first, being various, according to the divers circumstances of Childrens first entertainment in the World, the order, wherein the several *Ideas* come at first into the Mind, is very various, and uncertain also; neither is it much material to know it.

§ 8. We are farther to consider concerning Perception, that the *Ideas* we receive by sensation, are often in grown People alter'd by the Judgment, without our taking notice of it. When we set before our Eyes a round Globe, of any uniform colour, v.g. Gold, Alabaster, or Jet, 'tis certain, that the *Idea* thereby imprinted in our Mind, is of a flat Circle variously shadow'd, with several degrees of Light and Brightness coming to our Eyes. But we having by use been accustomed to perceive, what kind of appearance convex Bodies are wont to make in us; what alterations are made in the reflections of Light, by the difference of the sensible Figures of Bodies, the Judgment presently, by an habitual custom, alters the Appearances into their Causes: So that from that, which truly is variety of shadow or colour, collecting the Figure, it makes it pass for a mark of Figure, and frames to it self the perception of a convex Figure, and an uniform Colour; when the *Idea* we receive from thence, is only a Plain variously colour'd, as is evident in Painting. To which purpose I shall here insert a Problem of that very Ingenious and Studious promoter of real Knowledge, the Learned and Worthy Mr. *Molineux*, which he was pleased to

§ 7. Which *Ideas* first is not evident.

§§ 8-10. *Ideas* of Sensation often changed by the Judgment.

(5) necessities] 2-5 | necessity 1

(33)-146(25) To . . . convinced.] add. 2-5

send me in a Letter some Months since; and it is this: *Suppose a Man born blind, and now adult, and taught by his touch to distinguish between a Cube, and a Sphere of the same metal, and nighly of the same bigness, so as to tell, when he felt one and t'other, which is the Cube, which the Sphere.*
 5 *Suppose then the Cube and Sphere placed on a Table, and the Blind Man to be made to see. Quere, Whether by his sight, before he touch'd them, he could now distinguish, and tell, which is the Globe, which the Cube.* To which the acute and judicious Proposer answers: *Not. For though he has obtain'd the experience of, how a Globe, how a Cube affects his touch; yet he has not*
 10 *yet attained the Experience, that what affects his touch so or so, must affect his sight so or so; Or that a protuberant angle in the Cube, that pressed his hand unequally, shall appear to his eye, as it does in the Cube.* I agree with this thinking Gent. whom I am proud to call my Friend, in his answer to this his Problem; and am of opinion, that the Blind Man,
 15 at first sight, would not be able with certainty to say, which was the Globe, which the Cube, whilst he only saw them: though he could unerringly name them by his touch, and certainly distinguish them by the difference of their Figures felt. This I have set down, and leave with my Reader, as an occasion for him to consider, how
 20 much he may be beholding to experience, improvement, and acquired notions, where he thinks, he has not the least use of, or help from them: And the rather, because this observing Gent. farther adds, that *having upon the occasion of my Book, proposed this to divers very ingenious Men, he hardly ever met with one, that at first gave the answer to it, which he thinks true, till by hearing his reasons they were convinced.*

§ 9. But this is not, I think, usual in any of our *Ideas*, but those received by *Sight*: Because *Sight*, the most comprehensive of all our Senses, conveying to our Minds the *Ideas* of Light and Colours, which are peculiar only to that Sense; and also the far different
 30 *Ideas* of Space, Figure, and Motion, the several varieties whereof change the appearances of its proper Object, *viz.* Light and Colours, we bring our selves by use, to judge of the one by the other. This in many cases, by a settled habit, in things whereof we have frequent experience, is performed so constantly, and so quick, that we take
 35 that for the Perception of our Sensation, which is an *Idea* formed by our Judgment; so that one, *viz.* that of Sensation, serves only to excite the other, and is scarce taken notice of it self; as a Man who

(13) whom] 4-5 | whom though I have never had the happiness to see, 2-3 (*like-wise Coste*) (25) *v.* 145(33), n. (28) the] 2-5 | the far different 1 (29-30) the . . . *Ideas*] *add.* 2-5 (31) Object] 2-5 | Objects 1 (32) we . . . selves] 2-5 | it accustoms it self 1 (35) is] 2-5 | is but 1

reads or hears with attention and understanding, takes little notice of the Characters, or Sounds, but of the *Ideas*, that are excited in him by them.

§ 10. Nor need we wonder, that this is done with so little notice, if we consider, how very *quick* the *actions of the Mind* are performed: 5 For as it self is thought to take up no space, to have no extension; so its actions seem to require no time, but many of them seem to be crouded into an Instant. I speak this in comparison to the Actions of the Body. Any one may easily observe this in his own Thoughts, who will take the pains to reflect on them. How, as it were in an 10 instant, do our Minds, with one glance, see all the parts of a demonstration, which may very well be called a long one, if we consider the time it will require to put it into words, and step by step shew it another? Secondly, we shall not be so much surprized, that this is done in us with so little notice, if we consider, how the 15 facility which we get of doing things, by a custom of doing, makes them often pass in us without our notice. *Habits*, especially such as are begun very early, come, at last, to *produce actions in us, which often escape our observation.* How frequently do we, in a day, cover our Eyes with our Eye-lids, without perceiving that we are at all in the 20 dark? Men, that by custom have got the use of a By-word, do almost in every sentence, pronounce sounds, which, though taken notice of by others, they themselves neither hear, nor observe. And therefore 'tis not so strange, that our Mind should often change the *Idea* of its Sensation, into that of its Judgment, and make one serve only to 25 excite the other, without our taking notice of it.

§ 11. This faculty of *Perception*, seems to me to be that, which puts the distinction betwixt the animal Kingdom, and the inferior parts of Nature. For however Vegetables have, many of them, some degrees of Motion, and upon the different application of other Bodies to 30 them, do very briskly alter their Figures and Motions, and so have obtained the name of sensitive Plants, from a motion, which has some resemblance to that, which in Animals follows upon Sensation: Yet, I suppose, it is all bare Mechanism; and no otherwise produced, than the turning of a wild Oat-beard, by the insinuation of the 35

§§ 11-14. *Perception puts the difference between Animals and inferior Beings.*

(1) or] 2-5 | and 1 (6) is . . . have] 4-5 | takes up no space, has 1-3 (11) do] 2-5 | does 1 (16) which] *add.* 4-5 (19) escape] 4-5 | scape 1-3 (21) By-word] *Coste adds a linguistic note.*