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BOOK II
'OF IDEAS'

Chapter i
In which we discuss 'ideas in general', and incidentally consider whether the soul of man always thinks.

PHILALETHES. **§1.** Having examined whether ideas are innate, let us consider what they are like and what varieties of them there are. Is it not true that an 'idea is the object of thinking'?

THEOPHILUS. I agree about that, provided that you add that an idea is an immediate inner object, and that this object expresses the nature or qualities of things. If the idea were the *form* of the thought, it would come into and go out of existence with the actual thoughts which correspond to it, but since it is the *object* of thought it can exist before and after the thoughts. Sensible outer objects are only *mediate*, because they cannot act immediately on the soul. God is the only *immediate outer* object. One might say that the soul itself is its own immediate inner object; but that is only to the extent that it contains ideas, i.e. something corresponding to things. For the soul is a little world where distinct ideas represent God and confused ones represent the universe.

PHIL. **§2.** Our gentlemen who take the soul to be initially a blank page, 'void of all characters, without any ideas; [ask] How comes it to be furnished? Whence comes it by that vast store . . . ? To this [they] answer, in one word, from experience'.

THEO. This *tabula rasa* of which one hears so much is a fiction, in my view, which nature does not allow and which arises solely from the incomplete
110 notions of philosophers – such as vacuum, atoms, the state of rest (whether absolute, or of two parts of a whole relative to one another), or such as that prime matter which is conceived without any form. Things which are uniform, containing no variety, are always mere abstractions: for instance, time, space, and the other entities of pure mathematics. There is no body whose parts are at rest, and no substance which does not have something which distinguishes it from every other. Human souls differ not only from other souls but also from one another, though the latter differences are not of the sort that we call specific. And I think I can demonstrate that

every substantial thing, be it soul or body, has a unique relationship to each other thing; and that each must always differ from every other in respect of *intrinsic *denominations*. Not to mention the fact that those who hold forth about the 'blank page' cannot say what is left of it once the ideas have been taken away – like the Scholastics who leave nothing in their prime matter. It may be said that this 'blank page' of the philosophers means that all the soul possesses, naturally and inherently, are bare faculties. But inactive faculties – in short, the pure powers of the Schoolmen – are also mere fictions, unknown to nature and obtainable only by abstraction. For where will one ever find in the world a faculty consisting in sheer power without performing any act? There is always a particular disposition to action, and towards one action rather than another. And as well as the disposition there is an *endeavour towards action – indeed there is an infinity of them in any subject at any given time, and these endeavours are never without some effect. Experience is necessary, I admit, if the soul is to be made to have such and such thoughts, and if it is to take heed of the ideas that are in us. But how could experience and the senses provide the ideas? Does the soul have windows? Is it similar to writing-tablets, or like wax? Clearly, those who take this view of the soul are treating it as fundamentally corporeal. Someone will confront me with this accepted philosophical axiom, that there is nothing in the soul which 111
does not come from the senses. But an exception must be made of the soul itself and its states. *Nihil est in intellectu quod non fuerit in sensu, excipe: nisi ipse intellectus.* Now the soul includes being, substance, one, same, cause, perception, reasoning, and many other notions which the senses cannot provide. That agrees pretty well with your author of the *Essay*, for he looks for a good proportion of ideas in the mind's reflection on its own nature.

PHIL. I hope then that you will concede to this able author that all ideas come through sensation or through reflection; that is, through 'our observation employed either about external, sensible objects; or about the internal operations of our' soul.

THEO. In order to keep away from an argument upon which we have already spent too long, let me say in advance, sir, that when you say that ideas come from one or other of those causes, I shall take that to mean the actual perception of the ideas; for I believe I have shown that in so far as they contain something distinct they are in us before we are aware of them.

PHIL. With that in mind, let us see when the soul should be said to start perceiving and actually thinking of ideas. **§9.** 'I know it is an opinion, that the soul always thinks, . . . and that actual thinking is as inseparable from the soul, as actual extension is from the body'. **§10.** But I cannot

'conceive it any more necessary for the soul always to think, than for the body always to move; the perception of ideas being . . . to the soul, what motion is to the body'. That appears to me quite reasonable, at least; and I would be very pleased, sir, to have your opinion on it.

THEO. You have said it, sir: action is no more inseparable from the soul than from the body. For it appears to me that a thoughtless state of the soul and absolute rest in a body are equally contrary to nature, and never occur in the world. A substance which is in action at some time will be so forever after, for all the impressions linger on, merely being mixed with new ones. When one strikes a body one causes or rather induces[1] an infinity of swirls, as in a liquid – for fundamentally every solid is in some degree liquid, every liquid in some degree solid – and there is no way of ever
112 entirely stopping this internal turbulence. Now you may believe that since the body is never without movement, the soul which corresponds to it will never be without perception either.

PHIL. But 'that, perhaps, is the privilege of the . . . Author and Preserver' of all things, that being infinite in his perfections he 'never[2] slumbers nor sleeps; but is not competent to any finite being, at least not to [a being such as] the soul of man.'

THEO. Certainly, we slumber and sleep, and God has no need to. But it does not follow that when asleep we have no perceptions; rather, if the evidence is considered carefully it points the other way.

PHIL. 'There is something in us, that has a power to think'. But that does not imply that thinking is always occurring in us.

THEO. True powers are never simple possibilities; there is always endeavour, and action.

PHIL. But 'that the soul always thinks [is not] a self-evident proposition'.

THEO. I do not say that it is either. It cannot be found without a little attention and reasoning: the common man is no more aware of it than of the pressure of the air or the roundness of the earth.

PHIL. ''Tis doubted whether I thought all last night'; this is a question 'about a matter of fact,' and it must be settled 'by sensible experience'.

THEO. One settles it in the same way that one *proves that there are imperceptible bodies and invisible movements, though some people make fun of them. In the same way there are countless inconspicuous perceptions, which do not stand out enough for one to be aware of or to remember them but which manifest themselves through their inevitable consequences.

[1] '*excite ou détermine plutôt*'.
[2] Locke: 'Preserver of things, who never'. Coste's expansion.

PHIL. A certain author has objected that we maintain that the soul goes out of existence because we are not sensible of its existence during sleep. But that objection can only arise from a strange prejudice. For we 'do not say there is no soul in a man, because he is not sensible of it in his sleep; 113
but [we] do say, he cannot think . . . without being' aware of it.[1]

THEO. I have not read the book where that objection occurs. But there would have been nothing wrong with objecting against you simply that thought need not stop just because one is not aware of it; for if it did, then by parity of argument we could say that there is no soul while one is not aware of it. To meet that objection, you must show that it is of the essence of thought in particular that one be aware of it.

PHIL. **§11.** It is 'hard to conceive, that any thing should think, and not be conscious of it.'

THEO. That is undoubtedly the crux of the matter – the difficulty by which able people have been perplexed. But here is the way to escape from it. Bear in mind that we do think of many things all at once, but pay heed only to the thoughts that stand out most distinctly. That is inevitable; for if we were to take note of everything, we should have to direct our attention on an infinity of things at the same time – things which impress themselves on our senses and which are all sensed by us. And I would go further: something remains of all our past thoughts, none of which can ever be entirely wiped out. When we are in dreamless sleep, or when we are dazed by some blow or a fall or a symptom of an illness or other mishap, an infinity of small, confused *sensations occur in us. Death itself cannot affect the souls of animals in any way but that; they must certainly regain their distinct perceptions sooner or later, for in nature everything is orderly. I admit, though, that in that confused state the soul would be without pleasure and pain, for they are noticeable perceptions.

PHIL. **§12.** Is it not true that 'the men [we] have here to do with,' namely the *Cartesians who believe that the soul always thinks,[2] 'allow life, without a thinking [and knowing] soul to all other animals'? And that they see no difficulty about saying that the soul can think without being joined to a body?

THEO. Speaking for myself, my view is different; for although I share the Cartesians' view that the soul always thinks, I part company with them on the other two points. I believe that beasts have imperishable souls, and 114
that no soul – human or otherwise – is ever without some body. I hold that God alone is entirely exempt from this because he is pure act.

[1] Locke: 'sensible of it'. Coste's change.
[2] Added by Leibniz.

PHIL. If you had accepted the Cartesian view, I would have drawn the following conclusion from it. Since the bodies of Castor and of Pollux can stay alive while sometimes having a soul and sometimes not; and since a soul can stay in existence while sometimes being in a given body and sometimes out of it; it could be supposed that Castor and Pollux shared a single soul which acted in their bodies by turn, with each being asleep while the other was awake. In that case, it would make two persons as distinct as Castor and Hercules could be.

THEO. I in turn shall offer you a different supposition which appears to be more real. Must it not be agreed that after some passage of time or some great change one may suffer a total failure of memory? They say that Sleidan before his death forgot everything he knew, and there are plenty of other examples of this sad phenomenon. Now, suppose that such a man were made young again, and learned everything anew – would that make him a different man? So it is not memory that makes the very same man. But as for the fiction about a soul which animates different bodies, turn about, with the things that happen to it in one body being of no concern to it in the other: that is one of those fictions which go against the nature of things – like space without body, and body without motion – which arise from the incomplete notions of philosophers, and which vanish when one goes a little deeper. For it must be borne in mind that each soul retains all its previous impressions, and could not be separated into two halves in the manner you have described: within each substance there is a perfect bond between the future and the past, which is what creates the identity of the individual. Memory is not necessary for this, however, and is sometimes not even possible, because of the multitude of past and present impressions which jointly contribute to our present thoughts; for I believe that each of a man's thoughts has some effect, if only a confused one, or leaves some trace which mingles with the thoughts which follow it. One
115 may forget many things, but one could also retrieve them, much later, if one were brought back to them in the right way.

PHIL. **§13.** Those 'who do at any time sleep without dreaming, can never be convinced, that their thoughts are . . . busy'.

THEO. While sleeping, even without dreams, one always has some faint sensing going on. Waking up is itself a sign of this: the easier someone is to awaken, the more sense he has of what is going on around him, though often this sense is not strong enough to cause him to wake.

PHIL. **§14.** 'That the soul in a sleeping man should be this moment busy a thinking, and the next moment in a waking man, not remember, [appears][1] very hard to be conceived'.

[1] Locke: 'is'. Coste's change.

THEO. Not only is it easy to conceive, but something like it can be observed during every day of our waking lives. For there are always objects which strike our eyes and ears, and therefore touch our souls as well, without our paying heed to them. For our attention is held by other objects, until a given object becomes powerful enough to attract it, either by acting more strongly upon us or in some other way. It is as though we had been selectively asleep with regard to that object; and when we withdraw our attention from everything all together, the sleep becomes general. It is also a way of getting to sleep – dividing one's attention so as to weaken it.

PHIL. 'I once knew a man, that was bred a scholar, and had no bad memory, who told me, he had never dreamed in his life, till he had that fever, he was then newly recovered of, which was about the five or six and twentieth year of his age.'

THEO. I have also been told of a scholar, much older than that, who had never dreamed. But the case for saying that the soul perceives continually does not rest entirely on dreams, since I have shown how even when asleep it has some perception of what is happening around it.

PHIL. **§15.** 'To think often, and never to retain [the memory of what one thinks] so much as one moment, is a . . . useless sort of thinking'.

THEO. Every impression has an effect, but the effects are not always noticeable. When I turn one way rather than another, it is often because of a series of tiny impressions of which I am not aware but which make one movement slightly harder than the other. All our undeliberated actions result from a conjunction of minute perceptions; and even our customs and passions, which have so much influence when we do deliberate, come from 116
the same source; for these tendencies come into being gradually, and so without the *minute perceptions we would not have acquired these noticeable dispositions. I have already remarked [p. 56] that anyone who excluded these effects from moral philosophy would be copying the ill-informed people who exclude insensible corpuscles from natural science; and yet I notice that among those who speak of liberty there are some who, ignoring these insensible impressions which can suffice to tilt the balance, fancy that moral actions can be subject to sheer indifference like that of Buridan's ass half-way between two pastures. We shall discuss that more fully later on [pp. 166, 197f]. I admit, though, that these impressions tilt the balance without necessitating.

PHIL. Perhaps it will be said that in a man who is awake, his body plays a part in his thinking, and that the memory is preserved by traces in the brain; whereas when he sleeps the soul has its thoughts separately, in itself.

THEO. I would say nothing of the sort, since I think that there is always a perfect correspondence between the body and the soul, and since I use

bodily impressions of which one is not aware, whether in sleep or waking states, to prove that there are similar impressions in the soul. I even maintain that something happens in the soul corresponding to the circulation of the blood and to every internal movement of the viscera, although one is unaware of such happenings, just as those who live near a water-mill are unaware of the noise it makes. The fact is that if during sleep or waking there were impressions in the body which did not touch or affect the soul in any way at all, there would have to be limits to the union of body and soul, as though bodily impressions needed a certain shape or size if the soul was to be able to feel them. And that is indefensible if the soul is incorporeal, for there is no relation of proportion between an incorporeal substance and this or that modification of matter. In short, many errors can flow from the belief that the only perceptions in the soul are the ones of which it is aware.

PHIL. **§16.** Most of the dreams which we remember are extravagant and incoherent...So we should have to say either that the soul owes its capacity for rational thinking to the body or else that it retains none of its 'rational soliloquies'.

THEO. The body has counterparts of all the thoughts of the soul, rational or otherwise, and dreams have traces in the brain just as much as do the thoughts of those who are awake.

117 PHIL. **§17.** Since you are so confident 'that the soul always actually thinks, I [wish that you could tell me] what those ideas are, that are in the soul of a child, before, or just at the union with the body, before it hath received any by sensation.'

THEO. It is easy to satisfy you on my principles. The perceptions of the soul always correspond naturally to the state of the body; and when there are many confused and indistinct motions in the brain, as happens with those who have had little experience, it naturally follows that the thoughts of the soul cannot be distinct either. But the soul is never deprived of the aid of 'sensation'; for it always expresses its body, and this body is always affected in infinitely many ways by surrounding things, though often they provide only a confused impression.

PHIL. **§18.** But here is yet another question posed by the author of the *Essay*. 'I would be glad [he says] to learn from these men, who so confidently pronounce, that the human soul, or which is all one, that a man always thinks, how they...know it'.

THEO. I suggest that it needs even more 'confidence' to deny that anything happens in the soul of which we are not aware. For anything which is noticeable must be made up of parts which are not: nothing, whether thought or motion, can come into existence suddenly. In short, it is as

though someone were to ask, these days, how we know about insensible particles.

PHIL. **§19.** 'They who tell us, that the soul always thinks, do never, that I remember, [tell us] that a man always thinks.'

THEO. I suppose that that is because they are talking about the separated soul too, and that they would readily admit that the man always thinks while his soul and body are united. As for my own views: since I have 118
reason to hold that the soul is never completely separated from all body, I think it can be said without qualification that the man does and will always think.

PHIL. To say that a body is extended without having parts, and that anything thinks without being aware that it does so, are two assertions which seem equally unintelligible.

THEO. Forgive me, sir, but I must point out that when you contend that there is nothing in the soul of which it is not aware, you are begging the question. That contention has already held sway all through our first meeting, when you tried to use it to tear down innate ideas and truths. If I conceded it, I would not only be flying in the face of experience and of reason, but would also be gratuitously relinquishing my own view, for which I think I have made a good enough case. My opponents, accomplished as they are, have adduced no proof of their own firmly and frequently repeated contention on this matter; and what is more, there is an easy way of showing them that they are wrong, i.e. that it is impossible that we should always reflect explicitly on all our thoughts; for if we did, the mind would reflect on each reflection, *ad infinitum*, without ever being able to move on to a new thought. For example, in being aware of some present feeling, I should have always to think that I think about that feeling, and further to think that I think of thinking about it, and so on *ad infinitum*. It must be that I stop reflecting on all these reflections, and that eventually some thought is allowed to occur without being thought about; otherwise I would dwell for ever on the same thing.

PHIL. But could one not 'with as much reason...say, that a man is always hungry,' adding that he can be hungry without being aware of it?

THEO. There is a great deal of difference: hunger arises from special conditions which do not always obtain. Still, it is true that even when one is hungry one does not think about the hunger all the time; but when one thinks about it, one is aware of it, for it is a very noticeable disposition: there are always disturbances in the stomach, but they do not cause hunger unless they become strong enough. One should always observe this distinction between thoughts in general and noticeable thoughts. Thus, a

point which was offered in mockery of my view really serves to confirm it.

119 PHIL. **§23.** It may be asked now 'when a man begins to have any ideas' in his thought.[1] And it seems to me that one ought to reply that it is 'when he first has any sensation.'

THEO. That is my view too, though only for a somewhat special reason. For I believe that we are never without ideas, never without thoughts, and never without sensations either. But I distinguish ideas from thoughts. For we always have all our pure or distinct ideas independently of the senses, but thoughts always correspond to some sensation.

PHIL. **§25.** But the mind is 'merely passive' in the perception of simple ideas, which are the 'beginnings [or] materials of knowledge'; whereas in the forming of composite ideas it is active.[2]

THEO. How can it be wholly passive with respect to the perception of all simple ideas, when by your own admission some simple ideas are perceived through reflection? The mind must at least give itself its thoughts of reflection, since it is the mind which reflects. Whether it can shut them out is another matter; no doubt it cannot do so unless some circumstance prompts it to turn aside.

PHIL. So far we seem to have been in open disagreement. Now that we are moving on to consider ideas in detail, I hope that we shall find more to agree on and that our disagreements will be restricted to minor matters.

THEO. I shall be delighted to see able people accepting views which I hold to be true, for they can cause the views to be appreciated and can show them in a good light.

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Chapter ii
'Of simple ideas.'

PHILALETHES. **§1.** I hope then that you will still agree, sir, that some ideas are simple and some composite.[3] Thus, the warmth and softness of wax, the hardness and coldness of ice, provide simple ideas; for of these the soul has a uniform conception which is not distinguishable into different ideas.

THEOPHILUS. It can be maintained, I believe, that these sensible ideas appear simple because they are confused and thus do not provide the mind with any way of making discriminations within what they contain; just like distant things which appear rounded because one cannot discern their angles, even though one is receiving some confused impression from them. It is obvious that green, for instance, comes from a mixture of blue and

[1] Added by Leibniz. [2] Added by Leibniz.
[3] Locke: 'complex'. Coste's change.

yellow; which makes it credible that the idea of green is composed of the ideas of those two colours, although the idea of green appears to us as simple as that of blue, or as that of warmth. So these ideas of blue and of warmth should also be regarded as simple only in appearance. I freely admit that we treat them as simple ideas, because we are at any rate not aware of any divisions within them; but we should undertake the *analysis of them by means of further experiments, and by means of reason in so far as they can be made more capable of being treated by the intellect.

Chapter iii
'Of ideas of one sense.'

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PHILALETHES. **§1.** Now we can classify simple ideas according to how we come to perceive them, namely (1) by one sense only, (2) by more senses than one, (3) by reflection, or (4) by all the ways of sensation and reflection. As for those 'which have admittance only through one sense, which is peculiarly adapted to receive them[,] light and colours...come in only by the eyes: all kinds of noises, sounds, and tones only by the ears:' the several tastes by the palate, and smells by the nose. The organs or nerves convey them to the brain, and if some of the organs become disordered, those sensations have no side-entrance to be admitted by. 'The most considerable of those, belonging to the touch, are heat and cold, and solidity'. The rest consist either in the arrangement of sensible parts, 'as smooth and rough; or else [in the] adhesion of the parts, as hard and soft, tough and brittle'.

THEOPHILUS. I am pretty much in agreement with what you say, sir. But I might remark that, judging by the late Monsieur *Mariotte's experiment on the blind spot in the region of the optic nerve, it seems that membranes receive the *sensation more than nerves do; and that there is a side-entrance for hearing and for taste, since the teeth and the cranium contribute to the hearing of sounds, and tastes can be experienced in a fashion through the nose because the organs are connected. But none of that makes any fundamental difference as regards the elucidation of ideas. As for tactile qualities: smooth and rough, like hard and soft, can be described as mere modifications of resistance or solidity.

Chapter iv
'Of solidity.'

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PHILALETHES. **§1.** No doubt you will also agree that the *sensation[1] of solidity 'arises from the resistance which we find in body, to the entrance

[1] Locke: 'idea'.

absolute terms as sweet, and silver as white, even though to certain invalids one appears sour and the other yellow; for things are named according to what is most usual. None of this alters the fact that when the organ and the intervening medium are properly constituted, the internal bodily motions and the ideas which represent them to the soul resemble
133 the motions of the object which cause the colour, the warmth, the pain etc.; or – what is here the same thing – they express the object through some rather precise relationship; though this relation does not appear distinctly to us, because we cannot disentangle this multitude of minute impressions, whether in our soul or in our body or in what lies outside us.

PHIL. **§24.** The qualities which the sun has of blanching and softening wax, or hardening mud, we consider only as simple powers, without conceiving anything in the sun which resembles this whiteness and this softness, or this hardness. Yet warmth and light 'are commonly thought real qualities [of] the sun.... Whereas, if rightly considered, these qualities of light and warmth, which are perceptions in me..., are no otherwise in the sun, than the changes made in the wax, when it is blanched or melted, are in the sun.'

THEO. Some have pushed this doctrine so far that they have tried to persuade us that if someone could touch the sun he would find no heat in it. The counterfeit sun which can be felt at the focus of a mirror or a burning glass should disabuse them of that. But as for the comparison between the warming faculty and the melting one: I would venture to say that if the melted or blanched wax were sentient, it too would feel something like what we feel when the sun warms us, and it would say if it could that the sun is hot. This is not because the wax's whiteness resembles the sun, for in that case the brown of a face tanned by the sun would also resemble it; but because at that time there are motions in the wax which have a relationship with the motions in the sun which cause them. There could be some other cause for the wax's whiteness, but not for the motions which it has undergone in receiving whiteness from the sun.

Chapter ix
'Of perception.'

PHILALETHES. **§1.** This brings us specifically to ideas of reflection. 'Perception, as it is the first faculty of the [soul], exercised about our ideas;
134 so it is the first and simplest idea we have from reflection[. *Thinking* often] signifies that sort of operation of the mind about its ideas, wherein the mind is active; where it with some degree of voluntary attention, considers any thing. [But in what is called] *perception*, the mind is, for the most part, only passive; and what it perceives, it cannot avoid perceiving.'

THEOPHILUS. It might perhaps be added that beasts have perception, and that they don't necessarily have thought, that is, have reflection or anything which could be the object of it. We too have minute perceptions of which we are not aware in our present state. We could in fact become thoroughly aware of them and reflect on them, if we were not distracted by their multiplicity, which scatters the mind, and if bigger ones did not obliterate them or rather put them in the shade.

PHIL. **§4.** I admit that while the 'mind is intently employed in the contemplation of some objects; [it is no way aware][1] of impressions of [certain] bodies, made upon the organ of hearing.... A sufficient impulse there may be...; but it not reaching the observation of the [soul], there follows no perception'.

THEO. I would prefer to distinguish between *perception* and *being *aware*. For instance, a perception of light or colour of which we are aware is made up of many minute perceptions of which we are unaware; and a noise which we perceive but do not attend to is brought within reach of our awareness by a tiny increase or addition. If the previous noise had no effect on the soul, this minute addition would have none either, nor would the total. (I have already touched on this point at II.i.11, 12, 15 etc.)

PHIL. **§8.** This is a good time to remark that the ideas which are received by sensation are often altered by the judgment of the mind in grown people, without their being aware of it. The idea of a 'globe, of any uniform colour,...is of a flat circle variously shadowed' and lighted. But as we are accustomed to distinguish the appearances of bodies, and the alterations in the reflections of light according to the shapes of their surfaces, we substitute the cause of the image for what actually appears to us, and confound judging with seeing.[2]

THEO. That is perfectly true: this is how a painting can deceive us, by 135
means of an artful use of perspective. When bodies have flat surfaces they can be depicted merely by means of their outlines, without use of shading, painting them simply in the Chinese manner but with better proportions. This is how drawings of medallions are usually done, so that the draftsman can stay closer to the precise lineaments of the ancient originals. But such a drawing, unaided by shading, cannot distinguish definitely between a flat circular surface and a spherical surface – since neither contains any distinct points or distinguishing features – and yet there is a great difference

[1] Locke: 'it takes no notice'. Coste: '*il ne s'aperçoit en aucune manière*'.
[2] Locke: 'the judgment...alters the appearances into their causes'. Coste: '*nous mettons ...à la place de ce qui nous paraît, la cause même de l'image...joignant à la vision un jugement que nous confondons avec elle*'. The clause '*joignant...elle*', which may be based on Locke's §9, is contracted by Leibniz to '*et confondons le jugement avec la vision*'.

between them which ought to be marked. That is why M. *Desargues has offered rules about the effects of hue and shading.

So when we are deceived by a painting our judgments are doubly in error. First, we substitute the cause for the effect, and believe that we immediately see the thing that causes the image, rather like a dog barking at a mirror. For strictly we see only the image, and are affected only by rays of light. Since rays of light need time – however little – to reach us, it is possible that the object should be destroyed during the interval and no longer exist when the light reaches the eye; and something which no longer exists cannot be the present object of our sight. Secondly, we are further deceived when we substitute one cause for another and believe that what comes merely from a flat painting actually comes from a body. In such cases our judgments involve both metonymy and metaphor (for even figures of rhetoric turn into sophisms when they mislead us). This confusion of the effect with the real or the putative cause frequently occurs in other sorts of judgments too. This is how we come to believe that it is by an immediate real influence that we sense our bodies and the things which touch them, and move our arms, taking this influence to constitute the interaction between the soul and the body; whereas really all that we sense or alter in that way is what is within us.

PHIL. Here is a problem for you, which 'that very ingenious and studious promoter of real knowledge, the learned and worthy Mr *Molyneux,' sent to the distinguished Mr Locke. This is more or less how he worded it: '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. Suppose then the cube and sphere placed on a table, and the blind man to be made to see. *Quaere*, whether by his sight, before he touched them, he could now distinguish, and tell, which is the globe, which the cube.' Now, sir, please tell me what your view is about this.

THEO. The question strikes me as a rather interesting one. I would need to spend time thinking about it; but since you urge me to reply at once I will risk saying, just between the two of us, that I believe that if the blind man knows that the two shapes which he sees are those of a cube and a sphere, he will be able to identify them and to say without touching them that this one is the sphere and this the cube.

PHIL. I am afraid I have to include you among the many who have given Mr Molyneux the wrong answer. In the letter containing this question he recounts that having, on the occasion of Mr Locke's *Essay*, '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, [although after] hearing his reasons they were convinced' of their mistake. The answer which this 'acute and

judicious proposer' gives is negative. For, he says, though this blind man 'has obtained the experience of, how a globe, how a cube affects his touch; yet he [does not yet know] 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.' The author of the *Essay* declares that he entirely agrees.

THEO. It may be that Mr Molyneux and the author of the *Essay* are not as far from my opinion as at first appears, and that the reasons for their view – contained in Mr Molyneux's letter, it appears, and successfully used by him to convince people of their mistake – have been deliberately suppressed by our author in order to make his readers exercise their minds the harder. If you will just consider my reply, sir, you will see that I have included in it a condition which can be taken to be implicit in the question: namely that it is merely a problem of telling which is which, and that the blind man knows that the two shaped bodies which he has to discern are before him and thus that each of the appearances which he sees is either that of a cube or that of a sphere. Given this condition, it seems to me past question that the blind man whose sight is restored could discern them by applying rational principles to the sensory knowledge which he has already acquired by touch. I am not talking about what he might actually do on the spot, when he is dazzled and confused by the strangeness – or, one should add, unaccustomed to making inferences. My view rests on the fact that in the case of the sphere there are no distinguished points on the surface of the sphere taken in itself, since everything there is uniform and without angles, whereas in the case of the cube there are eight points which are distinguished from all the others. If there were not that way of discerning shapes, a blind man could not learn the rudiments of geometry by touch, nor could someone else learn them by sight without touch. However, we find that men born blind are capable of learning geometry, and indeed always have some rudiments of a natural geometry; and we find that geometry is mostly learned by sight alone without employing touch, as could and indeed must be done by a paralytic or by anyone else to whom touch is virtually denied. These two geometries, the blind man's and the paralytic's, must come together, and agree, and indeed ultimately rest on the same ideas, even though they have no images in common. Which shows yet again how essential it is to distinguish *images* from *exact ideas* which are composed of definitions. It would indeed be very interesting and even informative to investigate thoroughly the ideas of someone born blind, and to hear how he would describe shapes. For he could achieve that, and could even understand optical theory in so far as it rests on distinct mathematical ideas, though he would not be able to achieve a conception of the *vivid-confused*, i.e. of the image of light and colours. That is why one man born blind, who had heard lessons in optics and appeared to understand

them quite well, when he was asked what he believed light was, replied that he supposed it must be something pleasant like sugar. Similarly, it would be very important to investigate the ideas which a man born deaf and dumb can have about things without shapes: we ordinarily have the description of such things in words, but he would have to have it in an entirely different manner – though it might be equivalent to ours, just as Chinese writing produces an effect equivalent to that of our alphabet although it is utterly different from it and might appear to have been invented by a deaf man. I am indebted to a great Prince for the report of a man in Paris who was born deaf and dumb and whose ears have finally begun to perform their function. He has now learned the French language (the report came from the French court, not long ago), and will be able to tell very interesting things about his conceptions during his previous
138 state and about how his ideas have changed since beginning to exercise his sense of hearing. Men born deaf and dumb can accomplish more than one might think. There was one at Oldenburg, during the time of the last Count, who had become a good painter and also proved himself to be a very intelligent man. A most learned Breton has told me that around 1690 in Blain – a town belonging to the Duke de Rohan, ten leagues from Nantes – there was a poor man, born deaf and dumb, who lived in a hut near the chateau, outside the town; he would carry letters and so on to the town, and would be guided to the right houses by certain signs made to him by people who were used to employing him. Eventually the poor man became blind as well, yet he still made himself useful taking letters to the town, wherever was indicated to him by touch. He had a board in his hut, running from the door to the spot where his feet rested, and the movements of this would announce to him when someone was coming in. Men are very remiss in not informing themselves accurately about how such people think. If he is no longer alive there is likely to be someone on the spot who could still give us some information about him and explain how people indicated to him the tasks he was to carry out.

But to return to the man born blind who begins to see, and to what he would judge about the sphere and the cube when he saw but did not touch them: as I said a moment ago, I reply that he will know which is which if he is told that, of the two appearances or perceptions he has of them, one belongs to the sphere and the other to the cube. But if he is not thus instructed in advance, I grant that it will not at once occur to him that these paintings of them (as it were) that he forms at the back of his eyes, which could come from a flat painting on the table, represent bodies. That will occur to him only when he becomes convinced of it by the sense of touch or when he comes, through applying principles of optics to the light rays, to understand from the evidence of the lights and shadows that there is something blocking the rays and that it must be precisely the same thing that resists his touch. He will eventually come to understand this when he

sees the sphere and cube rolling, with consequent changes in their appearances and in the shadows they cast; or when, with the two bodies remaining still, the source of the light falling on them is moved or the position of his eyes changes. For these are pretty much the means that we do have for distinguishing at a distance between a picture or perspective representing an object and the real object.

PHIL. **§11.** Let us return to perception in general. It 'puts the distinction betwixt the animal kingdom, and the inferior' beings.

THEO. The great analogy which exists between plants and animals inclines 139
me to believe that there is some perception and appetite even in plants; and if there is a vegetative soul, as is generally thought, then it must have perception. All the same, I attribute to mechanism everything which takes place in the bodies of plants and animals except their initial formation. Thus I agree that the movements of what are called 'sensitive' plants result from mechanism,[1] and I do not approve of bringing in the soul when plant and animal phenomena have to be explained in detail.

PHIL. **§§13–14.** Indeed, 'I cannot but think, there is some small dull perception' even in such animals as oysters and cockles. For 'quickness of sensation [would only] be an inconvenience to an animal, that must lie still, where chance has once placed it; and there receive the afflux of colder or warmer, clean or foul water, as it happens to come to it'.

THEO. Very good, and I believe that almost the same could be said about plants. In man's case, however, perceptions are accompanied by the power to reflect, which turns into actual reflection when there are the means for it. But when a man is reduced to a state where it is as though he were in a coma, and where he has almost no *feeling, he does lose reflection and awareness, and gives no thought to general truths. Nevertheless, his faculties and dispositions, both innate and acquired, and even the impressions which he receives in this state of confusion, still continue: they are not obliterated though they are forgotten. Some day their turn will come to contribute to some noticeable result; for nothing in nature is useless, all confusion must be resolved, and even the animals, which have sunk into a condition of stupidity, must return at last to perceptions of a higher degree. Since simple substances endure for ever it is wrong to judge of eternity from a few years.

Chapter x
'Of retention.' 140

PHILALETHES. **§1.** 'The next faculty of the mind, whereby it makes a farther progress towards knowledge [of things than it does through simple

[1] Locke says this in §11.

perception],[1] is that which I call retention,' or the preserving of those items of knowledge[2] which the mind has received through the senses or through reflection. This is done in two ways: by keeping the idea actually in view, which is called contemplation; and **§2.** by keeping the power to bring ideas back before the mind, which is what is called memory.

THEOPHILUS. We also retain and contemplate innate knowledge, and very often we cannot distinguish the innate from the acquired. There is also perception of images, both those we have had for some time and those which have newly come into being in us.

PHIL. But it is believed by our party that these images or ideas 'cease to be any thing, when there is no perception of them, [and that] this laying up of...ideas in the repository of the memory, signifies no more but this, that the [soul] has a power, in many cases, to revive perceptions, which it has once had,' accompanied by a feeling which convinces it that it has had these sorts of perceptions before.[3]

THEO. If ideas were only the forms or manners of thoughts, they would cease with them; but you yourself have acknowledged, sir, that they are the inner objects of thoughts [p. 109], and as such they can persist. I am surprised that you can constantly rest content with bare 'powers' and 'faculties', which you would apparently not accept from the scholastic philosophers. What is needed is a somewhat clearer explanation of what this faculty consists in and how it is exercised: that would show that there are dispositions which are the remains of past impressions, in the soul as well as in the body, but which we are unaware of except when the memory has a use for them. If nothing were left of past thoughts the moment we ceased to think of them, it would be impossible to explain how we could keep the memory of them; to resort to a bare faculty to do the work is to talk unintelligibly.

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Chapter xi
Of discerning, or the faculty of distinguishing ideas.[4]

PHILALETHES. **§1.** On the faculty of 'discerning' ideas 'depends the evidence and certainty' of various propositions which are taken to be innate truths.

THEOPHILUS. I grant that it requires discernment to think of these innate ideas and to sort them out, but they are no less innate on that account.

[1] Added by Coste.
[2] Locke: 'those simple ideas'.
[3] Locke: 'with this additional perception annexed to them, that it has had them before.' Coste's change.
[4] Locke: 'Of discerning, and other operations of the mind.'

PHIL. **§2.** Quickness of wit[1] consists in the ready recall of ideas, but there is judgment in setting them out precisely and separating them accurately.

THEO. It may be that each of those is quickness of imagination, and that judgment consists in the scrutiny of propositions in accordance with reason.

PHIL. I pretty much agree with this distinction between wit and judgment. And sometimes there is judgment in not over-using judgment. For instance, 'it is a kind of an affront [to a witty remark] to go about to examine it, by the severe rules of truth, and good reason'.

THEO. That is a good point. Witty thoughts must at least appear to be grounded in reason, but they should not be scrutinized too minutely, just as we ought not to look at a painting from too close. It seems to me that Father *Bouhours, in his *Right Thinking in the Exercise of Wit*, has gone wrong on this count more than once; for instance in his scorn for Lucan's epigram: 'The winning cause pleased the Gods, but the losing one pleased Cato.'

PHIL. **§4.** 'The comparing them one with another, in respect of extent, degrees, time, place, or any other circumstances, is another operation of the mind about its ideas, and is that upon which depends all that large tribe of ideas, comprehended under relation.'

THEO. I take relation to be more general than comparison. Relations divide into those of *comparison* and those of *concurrence*. The former concern *agreement* and *disagreement* (using these terms in a narrower sense), and include resemblance, equality, inequality etc. The latter involve some *connection*, such as that of cause and effect, whole and parts, position and order etc. 142

PHIL. **§6.** The 'composition' of simple ideas to make complex ones is another operation of our mind. This may be taken to cover the faculty of 'enlarging' ideas by putting together several of the same kind, as in forming a dozen out of several units.

THEO. No doubt one is as much composition as the other, but the composition of like ideas is simpler than that of different ideas.

PHIL. **§7.** 'A bitch will nurse, play with, and be fond of young foxes, as much as...of her puppies, if you can but get them once to suck her so long, that her milk may go through them. And those animals, which have a numerous brood of young ones at once, appear not to have any knowledge of their number'.

[1] '*esprit*', which means both 'wit' and 'mind'. Locke in §2 is contrasting 'judgment' with 'wit'.

THEO. The affection of animals arises from a pleasure which is increased by familiarity. But as for precise numbers, even human beings can know the numbers of things only by means of some artifice, such as using numerals for counting, or arranging things in patterns so that it can be seen at a glance, without counting, if one is missing.

PHIL. **§10.** The beasts do not make abstractions either.

THEO. That is my view too. They apparently recognize whiteness, and observe it in chalk as in snow; but this does not amount to abstraction, which requires attention to the general apart from the particular, and consequently involves knowledge of universal truths, which beasts do not possess. It is also very well said that beasts which talk do not use speech to express general ideas, and that men who are incapable of speech and of words still make other general signs.[1] I am delighted to see you so well aware, here and elsewhere, of the privileges of human nature.

143 PHIL. **§11.** However, if beasts 'have any ideas at all, and are not bare machines (as some would have them) we cannot deny them to have [a certain degree of] reason. It seems as evident to me, that they . . .[2] reason, as that they have sense; but it is only in particular ideas, just as they received them from their senses.'

THEO. Beasts pass from one imagining to another by means of a link between them which they have previously experienced. For instance, when his master picks up a stick the dog anticipates being beaten. In many cases children, and for that matter grown men, move from thought to thought in no other way but that. This could be called 'inference' or 'reasoning' in a very broad sense. But I prefer to keep to accepted usage, reserving these words for men and restricting them to the knowledge of some *reason* for perceptions' being linked together. Mere sensations cannot provide this: all they do is to cause one naturally to expect once more that same linking which has been observed previously, even though the reasons may no longer be the same. Hence those who are guided only by their senses are frequently disappointed.

PHIL. **§13.** Imbeciles[3] are lacking in 'quickness, activity, and motion, in the intellectual faculties, whereby they are deprived of reason: whereas mad men, . . . seem to suffer by the other extreme. For they do not appear to me to have lost the faculty of reasoning: but having joined together some ideas very wrongly, they mistake them for truths; and they err as men do, that argue right from wrong principles. . . . Thus you shall find a distracted

[1] Presumably referring to Locke's §11, though that speaks of beasts which can 'pronounce words distinctly enough', not of ones which can 'talk'.
[2] Locke: 'do some of them in certain instances'. Coste's omission.
[3] Locke uses the now obsolete word 'naturals'.

man fancying himself a king, with a right inference, require suitable attendance, respect, and obedience'.

THEO. Imbeciles don't exercise reason at all. They differ from the stupid, whose judgment is sound but who are looked down on and are a nuisance because they are so slow to grasp things – as someone would be who insisted on playing cards with important people and then spent too long, too often, deciding how to play his hand. I recall that an able man who had lost his memory through using certain drugs was reduced to that condition, but his judgment continued to be evident. A complete madman lacks judgment in almost every situation, yet the quickness of his imagination can make him entertaining. But there are people who are selectively 144
mad: they acquire a false conviction about some important aspect of their lives and then reason correctly from it, as you have rightly pointed out. A man of this kind is well known at a certain court; he believes that he is destined to re-establish the Protestants and to put France to rights, and that to this end God has caused the most eminent personages to pass through his body in order to ennoble it. He seeks to marry all the marriageable princesses that he meets, but only after having sanctified them, in order to establish a holy lineage to govern the earth. He blames all the miseries of the war on the lack of respect paid to his counsels. When he speaks to a sovereign he takes all necessary measures to preserve his dignity. And when anyone engages in reasoning with him he defends himself so skillfully that more than once I have suspected that he is only feigning madness, since he does very well out of it. However, those who know him more intimately assure me that it is quite genuine.

PHIL. **§17.** 'The understanding is not much unlike a closet wholly shut from light, with only some little openings left, to let in external visible [images];[1] would the [images][2] coming into such a dark room but stay there, and lie so orderly as to be found upon occasion, it would very much resemble the understanding of a man'.

THEO. To increase the resemblance we should have to postulate that there is a screen in this dark room to receive the species,[3] and that it is not uniform but is diversified by folds representing items of innate knowledge; and, what is more, that this screen or membrane, being under tension, has a kind of elasticity or active force, and indeed that it acts (or reacts) in ways which are adapted both to past folds and to new ones coming from impressions of the species. This action would consist in certain vibrations or oscillations, like those we see when a cord under tension is plucked and 145

[1] Locke: 'resemblances'. Coste's change.
[2] Locke: 'pictures'. Coste's change.
[3] '*espèces*' – i.e. the 'sensible species' which Leibniz declares on p. 343 to be tolerable when understood as here.

gives off something of a musical sound. For not only do we receive images and traces in the brain, but we form new ones from them when we bring 'complex ideas' to mind; and so the screen which represents our brain must be active and elastic. This analogy would explain reasonably well what goes on in the brain. As for the soul, which is a simple substance or 'monad': without being extended it represents these various extended masses and has perceptions of them.

Chapter xii
'Of complex ideas.'

PHILALETHES. **§3.** Complex ideas are either of modes or of substances or of relations.

THEOPHILUS. This division of the objects of our thoughts into substances, modes and relations is pretty much to my liking. I believe that qualities are just modifications of substances, and that the understanding adds relations. More follows from this than people think.

PHIL. **§5.** Modes are either *simple* (such as a dozen, a score, which are made from simple ideas of the same kind, i.e. from units), or *mixed* (such as beauty) which contain simple ideas of different kinds.

THEO. It may be that *dozen* and *score* are merely relations and exist only with respect to the understanding. The units are separate and the understanding takes them together, however scattered they may be. However, although relations are the work of the understanding they are not baseless and unreal. The primordial understanding is the source of things; and the very reality of all things other than simple substances rests only on the foundation of the perceptions or phenomena of simple substances. Often the same holds with regard to mixed modes, i.e. they ought to be treated rather as relations.

PHIL. **§6.** 'The ideas of substances are such combinations of simple ideas, as are taken to represent distinct particular things subsisting by themselves;' in which the obscure notion of substance is always considered to be the first and chief, and is supposed without being known, whatever it may be in itself.[1]

THEO. The idea of substance is not as obscure as it is thought to be. We can know about it the things that have to be the case, and the ones that are found to be the case through other things; indeed knowledge of concrete things is always prior to that of abstract ones – hot things are better known than heat.

[1] Locke: 'in which the supposed, or confused idea of substance, such as it is, is always the first and chief.' Coste's change.

PHIL. 'Of substances also, there are two sorts of ideas; one of single substances,...as of a man, or a sheep; the other of several of those put together, as an army of men, or flock of sheep'. These collections also form a single idea.

THEO. This unity of the idea of an aggregate is a very genuine one; but fundamentally we have to admit that this unity that collections have is merely a respect or relation, whose foundation lies in what is the case within each of the individual substances taken alone. So the only perfect unity that these 'entities by aggregation' have is a mental one, and consequently their very being is also in a way mental, or *phenomenal, like that of the rainbow.

Chapter xiii
'Of simple modes; and first, of the simple modes of space.'

PHILALETHES. **§3.** 'Space considered [in relation to the] length between any two beings,...is called distance: if considered in [relation to] length, breadth, and thickness,...it may be called capacity'.

THEOPHILUS. To put it more clearly, the distance between two fixed things – whether points or extended objects – is the size of the shortest possible line that can be drawn from one to the other. This distance can be taken either absolutely or relative to some figure which contains the two distant things. For instance, a straight line is absolutely the distance between two points; but if these two points both lie on the same spherical surface, the distance between them on that surface will be the length of the smaller arc of the great circle that can be drawn from one to the other. It is also worth noticing that there are distances not only between bodies but also between surfaces, lines and points. And we can speak of the 'capacity', or rather the 'interval', between two bodies or two other extended things, or between an extended thing and a point, as being the space constituted by all the shortest lines which can be drawn between the points of the one and of the other. This interval will be a solid, except in the case where the two fixed things lie on a single surface and the shortest lines between their points either do lie on this surface or are expressly required to be drawn upon it.

PHIL. **§4.** In addition to what nature provides,[1] men have settled in their minds the ideas of certain determinate[2] lengths, such as an inch and a foot.

THEO. That they cannot do, for it is impossible to have the idea of an exact determinate length: no one can say or grasp in his mind what an inch or a foot is. And the signification of these terms can be retained only by means of real standards of measure which are assumed to be unchanging, through

[1] Added by Leibniz.

[2] Locke: 'stated'. Coste's change.

PHIL. **§5.** However, a change of relation can occur without there having been any change in the subject: Titius, 'whom I consider to day as a father, ceases to be so to morrow, only by the death of his son, without any alteration made in himself.'

THEO. That can very well be said if we are guided by the things of which we are aware; but in metaphysical strictness there is no wholly extrinsic denomination (*denominatio pure extrinseca*), because of the real connections amongst all things.

PHIL. **§6.** I believe that there is 'relation only betwixt two things.'

THEO. But there are instances of relations between several things at once, as occurs in an ordering or in a genealogical tree, which display the position and the connections of each of their terms or members. Even a figure such as a polygon involves the relation among all its sides.

PHIL. **§8.** It is worth noticing that 'the ideas of relations [are] clearer often, than of the subjects related.' Thus the idea[1] of *father* is clearer than that of *man*.

THEO. That is because this relation is so general that it can also apply to other substances. Besides, as there can be something *clear and something obscure in a subject, a relation can be grounded in what is clear. But if the very form of the relation involved knowledge of what is obscure in the subject, the relation would share in this obscurity.

PHIL. **§10.** Terms which 'necessarily lead the mind to . . . other ideas, than are supposed really to exist in that thing, to which the [term or] word is applied, are relative', and the others are absolute.

228 THEO. It is a good thing you put in 'necessarily', and you could also have added 'explicitly' or 'straight away', for we can think of black, for instance, without thinking of its cause, but that involves staying within the limits of the knowledge which comes to one straight away, which is either confused (when one has no analysis of the idea) or distinct but incomplete (when one has only a limited analysis). But there is no term which is so absolute or so detached that it does not involve relations and is not such that a complete analysis of it would lead to other things and indeed to all other things. Consequently, we can say that 'relative terms' *explicitly* indicate the relationship which they contain. I am here contrasting 'absolute' with 'relative': when I earlier contrasted it with 'limited' [pp. 154, 157f] that was in a different sense.

[1] Taking '*relation*' to be a slip.

Chapter xxvi
'Of cause and effect, and other relations.'

PHILALETHES. **§1.** *Cause* is 'that which produces any simple or complex idea', and *effect* is 'that which is produced'.

THEOPHILUS. I notice, sir, that you frequently understand by 'idea' the objective reality of the idea, i.e. the quality which it represents. You only define *efficient cause*, as I pointed out earlier [p. 216]. It must be admitted that in saying that 'efficient cause' is what produces and 'effect' is what is produced, you are merely dealing in synonyms. I have, it is true, heard you say somewhat more distinctly that 'cause' is what makes another thing begin to exist [pp. 168f]; although the word 'makes' also leaves the main difficulty intact. But this will become clearer later.

PHIL. **§4.** To mention some other relations, let me point out that there are 'other words of time, that ordinarily are thought to stand for positive ideas, which yet [are] relative, such as are *young*, *old*, etc.'; for they involve a relation to the ordinary duration of the substance of which we predicate them. Thus 'a man is called young at twenty years, and very young at seven years old: but yet a horse we call old at twenty, and a dog at seven years'. But we do not say that the sun and stars, or a ruby or a diamond, are old or young, because we do not know how long such things usually last. **§5.** It is the same thing with place and extension; for instance when we say that a thing is high or low, large or small. 'That will be a great horse to a Welshman, which [appears a very] little one to a Fleming', since each of them thinks of the horses which are raised in his own country.

THEO. These remarks are excellent. But we do sometimes depart somewhat from this approach, as when we say that a thing is old, not in comparison with things of its own kind, but of other kinds. For instance we say that the world or the sun is very old. When someone asked Galileo if he thought that the sun was eternal, he answered: 'Not eternal, but very old.'

Chapter xxvii
What identity or diversity is

PHILALETHES. **§1.** A relative idea of the greatest importance is that of identity or of diversity.[1] We never find, nor can we conceive it 'possible, that two things of the same kind should exist in the same place at the same time[. That is why, when] we demand, whether any thing be the same or no, it refers always to something that existed such a time in such a place

[1] Locke speaks of 'the ideas of identity and diversity'.

.... From whence it follows, that one thing cannot have two beginnings of existence, nor two things one beginning...in time and place'.

230 THEOPHILUS. In addition to the difference of time or of place there must always be an internal *principle of distinction*: although there can be many things of the same kind, it is still the case that none of them are ever exactly alike. Thus, although time and place (i.e. the relations to what lies outside) do distinguish for us things which we could not easily tell apart by reference to themselves alone, things are nevertheless distinguishable in themselves. So time and place do not constitute the core of identity and diversity, despite the fact that diversity in time or place brings with it differences in the states that are impressed upon a thing, and thus goes hand in hand with diversity of things. To which it can be added that it is by means of things that we must distinguish one time or place from another, rather than *vice versa*; for times and places are in themselves perfectly alike, and in any case they are not substances or complete realities. The method which you seem to be offering here as the only one for distinguishing among things of the same kind,[1] is founded on the assumption that interpenetration is contrary to nature. This is a reasonable assumption; but experience itself shows that we are not bound to it when it comes to distinguishing things. For instance, we find that two shadows or two rays of light interpenetrate, and we could devise an imaginary world where bodies did the same. Yet we can still distinguish one ray from the other just by the direction of their paths, even when they intersect.

PHIL. **§3.** What is called the *principle of individuation* in the Schools, where it 'is so much inquired after,...is existence it self, which determines a being...to a particular time and place incommunicable to two beings of the same kind.'

THEO. The 'principle of individuation' reduces, in the case of individuals, to the principle of distinction of which I have just been speaking. If two individuals were perfectly similar and equal and, in short, *indistinguishable* in themselves, there would be no principle of individuation. I would even venture to say that in such a case there would be no individual distinctness, no separate individuals. That is why the notion of atoms is chimerical and arises only from men's incomplete conceptions. For if there were atoms, i.e. perfectly hard and perfectly unalterable bodies which were incapable of internal change and could differ from one another only in size and in
231 shape, it is obvious that since they could have the same size and shape they would then be indistinguishable in themselves and discernible only by means of external denominations with no internal foundation; which is contrary to the greatest principles of reason. In fact, however, every body

[1] Locke implies this in §2.

is changeable and indeed is actually changing all the time, so that it differs in itself from every other. I remember a great princess [*Sophie], of lofty intelligence, saying one day while walking in her garden that she did not believe there were two leaves perfectly alike. A clever gentleman who was walking with her believed that it would be easy to find some, but search as he might he became convinced by his own eyes that a difference could always be found. One can see from these considerations, which have until now been overlooked, how far people have strayed in philosophy from the most natural notions, and at what a distance from the great principles of true metaphysics they have come to be.

PHIL. **§4.** What constitutes the *unity* (identity) of a single plant[1] is having 'such an organization of parts in one ... body, partaking of one common life,' which lasts as long as the plant exists, even though it changes its parts.

THEO. Organization or configuration alone, without an enduring principle of life which I call 'monad', would not suffice to make something remain numerically the same, i.e. the same individual. For the configuration can continue specifically[2] without continuing individually. When an iron horse-shoe changes to copper in a certain mineral water from Hungary, the same kind of shape remains but not the same individual: the iron dissolves, and the copper, with which the water is impregnated, is precipitated and imperceptibly replaces it. But the shape is an accident, which does not pass from one subject to another (*de subjecto in subjectum*). So we must acknowledge that organic bodies as well as others remain 'the same' only in appearance, and not strictly speaking. It is rather like a river whose water is continually changing, or like Theseus's ship which the Athenians were constantly repairing. But as for substances which possess in themselves a genuine, real, substantial unity, and which are capable of actions which can properly be called 'vital'; and as for substantial beings, *quae uno spiritu continentur* as one of the ancient jurists says, meaning that a certain indivisible spirit animates them: one can rightly say that they remain perfectly 'the same individual' in virtue of this soul or spirit which makes the *I* in substances which think.

PHIL. **§5.** 'The case is not so much different in brutes' from how it is in plants.

THEO. If plants and brutes have no souls, then their identity is only apparent, but if they do have souls their identity is strictly genuine, although their organic bodies do not retain such an identity.

[1] Locke speaks of what '[is] one plant', Coste of '*l'unité d'une plante*', and Leibniz of '*l'unité (identité) d'une même plante*'.

[2] '*spécifiquement*', cognate with '*espèce*' which in this context is rendered by 'kind'.

PHIL. **§6.** 'This also shows wherein the identity of the same man consists; viz. in nothing but' his enjoying the same life, which is continued[1] 'by constantly fleeting particles of matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized body.'

THEO. That can be understood in my way. In fact, an organic body does not remain the same for more than a moment; it only remains equivalent. And if no reference is made to the soul, there will not be the same life, nor a 'vital' unity, either. So the identity in that case would be merely apparent.

PHIL. 'He that shall place the identity of man in any thing else, but . . . in one fitly organized body taken in any one instant, and from thence continued under one organization of life in several successively fleeting particles of matter, united to it, will find it hard, to make an embryo, one of years, mad, and sober, the same man,' without its following from this supposition that it is 'possible for Seth, Ishmael, Socrates, Pilate, St Augustine . . . to be the same man. [This] would agree yet worse with the notions of those philosophers, who allow of transmigration, and are of opinion that the souls of men may, for their miscarriages, be detruded into the bodies of beasts . . . . But yet I think no body, could he be sure that the soul of Heliogabalus were in [a hog], would yet say that hog were a man [, and the same man as] Heliogabalus.'

THEO. We have here both a question about the name and a question about the thing. As regards the thing, a single individual substance can retain its identity only by preservation of the same soul, for the body is in
233 continual flux and the soul does not reside in certain atoms which are reserved for it or in some little indestructible bone, like the *luz* of the rabbins. However, there is no 'transmigration' in which the soul entirely abandons its body and passes into another. Even in death it always retains an organic body, part of its former one, although what it retains is always subject to wasting away insensibly and to restoring itself, and even at a given time to undergoing a great change. Thus, instead of transmigration of the soul there is reshaping, infolding, unfolding, and flowing, in the soul's body. M. van *Helmont the younger believed that souls pass from body to body, but always within the same species. This implies that there will always be the same number of souls of a given species – the same number of men or of wolves, so that if the wolves have been reduced or wiped out in England they must have correspondingly increased elsewhere. Certain meditations published in France seemed to take the same view [*Lannion]. If transmigration is not taken strictly, i.e. if anyone thought that souls remain in the same rarefied bodies and only change their coarse bodies, that would be possible, even to the extent of the same soul's passing

[1] Locke: 'nothing but a participation of the same continued life,'. Coste's change.

into a body of another species in the Brahmin or Pythagorean manner. But not everything which is possible is therefore in conformity with the order of things. If such a transformation did occur, however, and assuming in accordance with rabbinical doctrine that Cain, Ham and Ishmael had the same soul, the question of whether they ought to be called the same man is merely a question of a name. I have noticed that the distinguished author whose opinions you have supported recognizes this and sets it forth very clearly (in the final paragraph of this chapter). There would be identity of substance but, if there were no connection by way of memory between the different *personae*[1] which were made by the same soul, there would not be enough moral identity to say that this was a single person. And if God wished a human soul to pass into the body of a hog and to forget the man and perform no rational acts, it would not constitute a man. But if while in the body of the beast it had the thoughts of a man, and even of the man whom it had animated before the change, like the golden ass of Apuleius, perhaps no one would object to saying that the same Lucius, who had come to Thessaly to see his friends, remained inside the skin of the ass where Photis had inadvertently put him, and wandered from master to master until by eating the roses he was restored to his natural shape.

PHIL. **§8.** 'I think I may be confident, that whoever [of us] should see a creature of his own shape and make, though it [gave no more appearance of][2] reason all its life, than a cat or a parrot, would call him still a man; or whoever should hear . . . a parrot discourse, reason, and philosophize, would call or think it nothing but . . . a parrot; and say, the [first of these animals] was a dull irrational man, and the [second] a very intelligent rational parrot.'

THEO. I agree more with the second point than with the first, although something needs to be said about that too. Few theologians would be bold enough to decide straight away and without qualification to baptize an animal of human shape, lacking the appearance of reason, which[3] had been found as an infant in the woods. A priest of the Roman Church might say conditionally 'If you are a man I baptize you'. For it would not be known whether it belonged to the human race and whether there was a rational soul in it; it might be an orang-outang – a monkey closely resembling a man in external features – like the one *Tulp speaks of having seen, and the one whose anatomy has been published by a learned physician. It is certain, I admit, that a man can become as stupid as an orang-outang; but the inner being of the rational soul would remain despite the suspending of the exercise of reason, as I have already explained. So that is the essential

[1] '*personnages*'; see footnote on p. 58.
[2] Locke: 'had no more'. Coste's change.
[3] Or 'who': the French leaves the question open.

point, and it cannot be settled by appearances. As to the second case, there is no obstacle to there being rational animals of some other species than
235 ours, like the poet's birds who had their kingdom in the sun, where a parrot who had gone there from this world after his death saved the life of a traveller who had been kind to him on earth [*moon]. However if, as happens in fairy-land and in Mother Goose, a parrot were the transformed daughter of a king and revealed itself as such by speaking, no doubt the father and mother would caress it as their daughter and would believe that they had her back though concealed in that alien form. Still, I would not quarrel with someone who said that in the Golden Ass there is still the same 'self' or individual (because of the same immaterial spirit), as well as the same Lucius or person (because of his awareness of this *I*), but that it is no longer a man. Indeed it does seem that we have to add something about the shape and constitution of the body to the definition of man, when he is said to be a rational animal; otherwise, according to my views, *Spirits would also be men.

PHIL. **§9.** The word *person* stands for 'a thinking intelligent being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by' the sense that it has of its own actions.[1] And this knowledge[2] always accompanies our present sensations and perceptions – when they are sufficiently distinct, as I have remarked more than once already – '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[3] always accompanies thinking, and 'tis that, that 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. [what makes] a rational being [always the same]: 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 [as] it was then'.

236 THEO. I also hold this opinion that consciousness or the sense of *I* *proves moral or personal identity. And that is how I distinguish the *incessancy* of a beast's soul from the *immortality* of the soul of a man: both of them preserve ***real***, ****physical identity***; but it is consonant with the rules of divine providence that in man's case the soul should also retain a moral identity which is apparent to us ourselves, so as to constitute the same person, which is therefore sensitive to punishments and rewards. You seem to hold, sir, that this apparent identity could be preserved in the absence of any real

[1] Locke: 'only by . . . consciousness.' Coste's change.
[2] Locke: 'consciousness'. Coste's change.
[3] '*conscience* (*consciousness, *consciosité*)'.

identity. Perhaps that could happen through God's absolute power; but I should have thought that, according to the order of things, an identity which is apparent to the person concerned – one who senses himself to be the same – presupposes a real identity obtaining through each immediate [temporal] transition accompanied by reflection, or by the sense of *I*; because an intimate and immediate perception cannot be mistaken in the natural course of things. If a man could be a mere machine and still possess consciousness, I would have to agree with you, sir; but I hold that that state of affairs is not possible – at least not naturally. I would not wish to deny, either, that 'personal identity' and even the 'self' persist in us, and that I am that *I* who was in the cradle, merely on the grounds that I can no longer remember anything that I did at that time. To discover one's own moral identity unaided, it is sufficient that between one state and a neighbouring (or just a nearby) one there be a mediating bond of consciousness, even if this has a jump or forgotten interval mixed into it. Thus, if an illness had interrupted the continuity of my bond of consciousness, so that I did not know how I had arrived at my present state even though I could remember things further back, the testimony of others could fill in the gap in my recollection. I could even be punished on this testimony if I had done some deliberate wrong during an interval which this illness had made me forget a short time later. And if I forgot my whole past, and[1] needed to have myself taught all over again, even my name and how to read and write, I could still learn from others about my life during my preceding state; and, similarly, I would have retained[2] my rights without having to be divided into two persons and made to inherit from myself. All this is enough to maintain the moral identity which makes the same person. It is true that if the others conspired to deceive me (just as I might deceive myself by some vision or dream or illness, thinking that what I had dreamed had really happened to me), then the appearance would be false; but sometimes we can be morally certain of the truth on the credit of others' reports. And in relation to God, whose social bond with us is the cardinal point of morality, error cannot occur. As regards 'self', it will be as well to distinguish it from the appearance of self and from consciousness. The 'self' makes real physical identity, and the appearance of self, when accompanied by truth, adds to it personal identity. So, not wishing to say that personal identity extends no further than memory, still less would I say that the 'self', or physical identity, depends upon it. The existence of real personal identity is proved with as much certainty as any matter of fact can be, by present and immediate reflection; it is proved conclusively enough for ordinary purposes by memories across intervals[3]

[1] Replacing '*je serais*' by '*et fusse*' from an earlier version.
[2] Or: 'and [learn about] how I had retained'. Or: 'just as I have retained'.
[3] '*par notre souvenir d'intervalle*'.

and by the concurring testimony of other people. Even if God were to change the real identity in some extraordinary manner, the personal identity would remain, provided that the man preserved the appearances of identity – the inner ones (i.e. the ones belonging to consciousness) as well as outer ones such as those consisting in what appears to other people. Thus, consciousness is not the only means of establishing personal identity, and its deficiencies may be made up by other people's accounts or even by other indications. But difficulties arise when there is a conflict between these various appearances. Consciousness may stay silent, as in loss of memory; but if it spoke out plainly in opposition to the other appearances, we would be at a loss to decide and would sometimes be suspended between two possibilities: that the memory is mistaken or that outer appearances are deceptive.

PHIL. **§11.** It will be said that the limbs of each man's body are parts of himself; and that therefore, since his body is in constant flux, the man cannot remain the same.

238 THEO. I would rather say that the *I* and the *he* are without parts, since we say, quite correctly, that he continues to exist as really the same substance, the same physical *I*; but we cannot say – with complete fidelity to the truth of things – that the same whole continues to exist if a part of it is lost. And what has bodily parts cannot avoid losing some of them at every moment.

PHIL. **§13.** 'The consciousness of [one's] past actions [could not] be transferred from one thinking substance to another' – and our having a sense of ourselves as the same would render it certain that the same substance remained[1] – if 'the same consciousness [were] the same individual action', that is, if there were no difference between the action of reflecting and the action on which one reflected in being aware of it.[2] 'But it being but a present representation of a past action, why it may not be possible, that that may be represented to the mind to have been, which really never was, will remain to be shown.'

THEO. We can be deceived by a memory across an interval – one often experiences this and one can conceive of a natural cause of such an error. But a present or immediate memory, the memory of what was taking place immediately before – or in other words, the consciousness or reflection which accompanies inner activity – cannot naturally deceive us. If it could, we would not even be certain that we are thinking about such and such a thing; for this too [sc. 'I think...' as well as 'I remember...'] is silently said only about past actions, not about the very action of saying it. But if immediate inner experience is not certain, we cannot be sure of any truth of fact. I have already said that there can be an intelligible reason for the element of error in perceptions which are mediate and outer,

[1] Added by Leibniz. [2] Added by Leibniz.

but with regard to immediate inner ones such a reason could not be found except by having recourse to God's omnipotence.

PHIL. **§14.** 'As to the...question, whether the same immaterial substance remaining, there may be two distinct persons; which question seems to me to be built on this, whether, the same immaterial being...may be... stripped of all [sense][1] of its past existence, and lose it beyond the power of ever retrieving again: and so as it were beginning a new account from a new period, have a consciousness that cannot reach beyond this new state. All those who hold pre-existence [of souls] are evidently of this mind.... I once met with one, who was persuaded his had been the soul of Socrates (...I know, that in the post he filled, which was no inconsiderable one, he passed for a very rational man, and [his published works have] shown, that he wanted not parts or learning).... Souls being, as far as we know any thing of them in their nature, indifferent to any parcel of matter, the supposition [of a single soul's passing from one body to another] has no apparent absurdity in it.... But he, now having no' sense of anything at all that Nestor or Socrates ever did or thought,[2] 'does, or can he, conceive himself the same person with either of them? Can he be concerned in either of their actions? Attribute them to himself, or think them his own more than the actions of any other man, that [already] existed?...He is no more one [person] with either of them, than if the soul [which is now in] him, had been created...when it began to inform his present body.... This would no more make him the same person with Nestor, than if some of the particles of matter, that were once a part of Nestor, were now a part of this man, the same immaterial substance without the same consciousness, no more making the same person by being united to any body, than the same' particles of matter united to any body without a common consciousness can make[3] 'the same person.'

THEO. An immaterial being or spirit cannot 'be stripped of all' perception of its past existence. It retains impressions of everything which has previously happened to it, and it even has presentiments of everything which will happen to it; but these states of mind[4] are mostly too minute to be distinguishable and for one to be aware of them, although they may perhaps grow some day. It is this continuity and interconnection[5] of perceptions which make someone really the same individual; but our awarenesses – i.e. when we are aware of past states of mind[6] – *prove a

[1] Locke: 'consciousness'. Coste: '*sentiment*', with '*ou con-science*' in the margin.
[2] Locke: 'no consciousness of any of the actions either of Nestor or Thersites'. Coste's changes, except for Leibniz's 'Socrates'.
[3] Locke: 'particle of matter without consciousness united to any body, makes'. Coste's change.
[4] '*sentiments*'.
[5] '*liaison*'.
[6] '*sentiments*'.

moral identity as well, and make the real identity appear. The pre-existence of souls does not appear to us through our perceptions. But if it really were the case, it could some day make itself known. So it is unreasonable to suppose that memory should be lost beyond any possibility of recovery, since insensible perceptions, whose usefulness I have shown in so many
240 other important connections, serve a purpose here too – preserving the seeds of memory. The late Mr Henry *More, the Anglican theologian, was convinced of the pre-existence of the soul and wrote in support of it. The late M. van Helmont the younger went further, as I have just said, and believed in the transmigration of souls, although always between bodies of the same species, so that in his opinion human souls always animate men. He believed, like certain rabbins, that the soul of Adam passed into the Messiah as the new Adam. For all I know he may, clever man though he was, have believed himself to be one of the ancients. I have explained earlier [p. 233] a way in which the migration of souls is possible (though it does not appear likely), namely that souls might, while retaining rarefied bodies, pass suddenly into other coarse bodies. If migration really did occur – at least, if it occurred in that manner – then the same individual would exist throughout, in Nestor, in Socrates and in some modern; and it[1] could even let its identity be known to someone who penetrated deeply enough into its nature, by means of the impressions or records of all that Nestor or Socrates had done, which remained in it and could be read there by a sufficiently acute mind. Yet if the modern man had no way, inner or outer, of knowing what he has been, it would from a moral point of view be as though he had never been it. But it appears that nothing in the world lacks significance – moral significance, indeed – since God reigns over the world and his government is perfect. On my hypotheses souls are not 'indifferent to any parcel of matter', as it seems to you that they are; on the contrary they inherently express those portions with which they are and must be united in an orderly way. So if they passed into a new coarse or sensible body, they would still retain the expression of everything of which they had had any perception in the old one; and indeed the new body would have to feel the effects of it, so that there will always be real marks of the continuance of the individual. But whatever our past state may have
241 been, we cannot always be aware of the effect which it leaves behind. The able author of the *Essay on Understanding*, whose views you had adopted, remarks (xxvii.27) that his suppositions or fictions about the migration of souls – considered as being possible – rest partly on the fact that the mind is commonly regarded not merely as 'independent' of matter but also as 'indifferent' to every kind of matter. But I hope, sir, that what I have said to you on this topic, in one place and another, will clear up this uncertainty and will give a better grasp of what can naturally happen. It shows in what

[1] Or 'he', and so throughout the rest of the sentence.

way the actions of an ancient would belong to a modern who possessed the same soul, even though he was unaware of them. But if it did come to be known, that would imply personal identity in addition. What makes the same human individual is not 'a parcel of matter' which passes from one body to another, nor is it what we call *I*; rather, it is the soul.

PHIL. **§16.** However, it is true that I am 'as much concerned, and as justly accountable for any action was done a thousand years since, appropriated to me now by this self-consciousness'[1] which I now have, as having been done by myself, 'as I am, for what I did the last moment.'

THEO. This belief that we have done something can deceive us if the action was long ago. People have mistaken their dreams for reality, and have come to believe their own stories by constantly repeating them. Such a false belief can cause perplexity, but it cannot make one liable to punishment if there are no other beliefs which confirm it. On the other hand, one can be accountable for what one has done, even if one has forgotten it, provided that there is independent confirmation of the action.

PHIL. **§17.** 'Every one finds [daily] that whilst comprehended under that consciousness, the little finger is as much a part of it self [(of him)][2] as what is most so.'

THEO. I have said (§11) why I would not wish to maintain that my finger is part of *me*; but it is true that it belongs to me and is a part of my body.

PHIL. Those who hold a different view will say: 'Upon separation of this little finger, should this consciousness go along with the little finger, and leave the rest of the body, 'tis evident the little finger would be the person, the same person; and self then would have nothing to do with the rest of the body.'

THEO. Nature does not permit these fictions, which are eliminated by the system of harmony, i.e. of the perfect correspondence between soul and body.

PHIL. **§18.** It seems, though, that 'if the same body should still live, and ...have its own peculiar consciousness, whereof the little finger knew nothing' – and if, nevertheless, the soul was in the finger – the finger could not acknowledge any of the actions of the rest of the body, nor could one impute them to it.

THEO. Nor would the soul which was in the finger belong to this body. I admit that if God brought it about that consciousnesses were transferred to other souls, the latter would have to be treated according to moral notions as though they were the same. But this would disrupt the order of things for no reason, and would divorce what can come before our

[1] Leibniz and Coste use '*conscience*' and the English word.
[2] Added by Leibniz.

awareness from the truth – the truth which is preserved by insensible perceptions. That would not be reasonable, since perceptions which are at present insensible may grow some day: nothing is useless, and eternity provides great scope for change.

PHIL. **§20.** 'Human laws [do not punish] the mad man for the sober man's actions, nor the sober man for what the mad man did, [and so they make] them two persons[. Thus] we say such an one . . . is *besides himself*'.

THEO. The laws threaten punishment and promise reward in order to discourage evil actions and encourage good ones. But a madman may be in a condition where threats and promises barely influence him, since his reason is no longer in command; and so the severity of the penalty should be relaxed in proportion to his incapacity. On the other hand, we want the criminal to have a sense of the effects of the evil he has done, in order to increase people's fear of committing crimes; but since the madman is not sufficiently sensitive, we are content to postpone for some time carrying out the sentence by which we punish him for what he did while in his right mind. Thus what laws and judges do in these cases is not the result of their supposing that two persons are involved.

PHIL. **§22.** Indeed, those whose views I am presenting to you have raised this objection against themselves: if a man who is drunk and who then becomes sober is not the same person, he ought not to be punished for what he did while drunk, since he no longer has any sense of it. To this it is
243 replied that he is '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.'

THEO. There is a great deal of difference between the actions of a drunk man and of a true and acknowledged sleepwalker. We punish drunkards because they could stay sober and may even retain some memory of the punishment while they are drunk. But a sleepwalker is less able to abstain from his nocturnal walk and from what he does during it. Still, if it were true that a good birching on the spot would make him stay in bed, we would have the right to carry it out – and we would carry it out, too, although this would be a remedy rather than a punishment. Indeed, this remedy is reported to have been effective.

PHIL. 'Human laws punish both with a justice suitable to [men's] way of knowledge [of things]: because in these [sorts of] cases, they cannot distinguish certainly what is real, what counterfeit; and so the ignorance in drunkenness or sleep is not admitted as a plea. . . . The fact is proved against him, but want of consciousness cannot be proved for him.'

THEO. The real question is not so much that as what to do when it has been well established – as it can be – that the drunkard or the sleepwalker

really was beside himself. In that case the sleepwalker can only be regarded as victim of a mania; but since drunkenness is voluntary and sickness is not, we punish the one rather than the other.

PHIL. 'But in the great [and fearful day of judgment], wherein the secrets of all hearts shall be laid open, [we are entitled] 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.'

THEO. I doubt that man's memory will have to be raised up on the day of judgment so that he can remember everything which he had forgotten, and that the knowledge of others, and especially of that just Judge who is never deceived, will not suffice. One could invent the fiction, not much in accord with the truth but at least possible, that a man on the day of judgment believed himself to have been wicked and that this also appeared true to all the other created spirits who were in a position to offer a judgment on the matter, even though it was not the truth. Dare one say that the supreme and just Judge, who alone knew differently, could damn this person and judge contrary to his knowledge? Yet this seems to follow from the notion of 'moral person' which you offer. It may be said that if God judges contrary to appearances, he will not be sufficiently glorified and will bring distress to others; but it can be replied that he is himself his own unique and supreme law, and that in this case the others should conclude that they were mistaken.

PHIL. **§23.** If we could suppose either that two distinct incommunicable consciousnesses might act alternately in the same body, the one constantly by day, the other by night; or that the same consciousness might act by intervals in two distinct bodies; 'I ask in the first case, whether the *day* and the *night*-man, [if I may express myself in this way,] would not be two as distinct persons, as Socrates and Plato; and whether in the second case, there would not be one person in two distinct bodies'? It is not relevant that this single consciousness which affects two different bodies, and these consciousnesses which affect the same body at different times, belong in the one case to the same immaterial substance, and in the other to two distinct immaterial substances, which introduce those different consciousnesses into those bodies; since 'the personal identity would equally be determined by the consciousness, whether that consciousness were annexed to some individual immaterial substance or no. [Furthermore,] that immaterial thinking thing may sometimes [lose sight of] its past consciousness, and [recall] it again[1] . . . . Make these intervals of memory and forgetfulness to take their turns regularly by day and night, and you

[1] Locke: 'part with its past consciousness, and be restored to it again'. Coste's change.

have two persons with the same immaterial spirit.... So that *self* is not determined by identity or diversity of substance, which [one] cannot be sure of, but only by identity of consciousness.'

THEO. I acknowledge that if all the appearances of one mind were transferred to another, or if God brought about an exchange between two minds by giving to one the visible body of the other and its appearances and states of consciousness, then personal identity would not be tied to the identity of substance but rather would go with the constant appearances, which are what human morality must give heed to. But these appearances
245 would not consist merely in states of consciousness: God would have to exchange not only the states of awareness or consciousness of the individuals concerned, but also the appearances which were presented to others; otherwise what the others had to say would conflict with the consciousnesses of the individuals themselves, which would disturb the moral order. Still, it must be granted to me that the divorce between the insensible and sensible realms, i.e. between the insensible perceptions which remained in the same substances and the states of awareness which were exchanged, would be a miracle – like supposing God to create a vacuum. For I have already explained why this is not in conformity with the natural order. Here is something we could much more fittingly suppose: in another region of the universe or at some other time there may be a sphere in no way sensibly different from this sphere of earth on which we live, and inhabited by men each of whom differs sensibly in no way from his counterpart among us. Thus at one time there will be more than a hundred million pairs of similar persons, i.e. pairs of persons with the same appearances and states of consciousness. God could transfer the minds, by themselves or with their bodies, from one sphere to the other without their being aware of it; but whether they are transferred or left where they are, what would your authorities say about their persons or 'selves'? Given that the states of consciousness and the inner and outer appearances of the men on these two spheres cannot yield a distinction between them, are they two persons or are they one and the same? It is true that they could be told apart by God, and by minds which were capable of grasping the intervals [between the spheres] and their outer relations of space and time, and even the inner constitutions, of which the men on the two spheres would be insensible. But since according to your theories consciousness[1] alone distinguishes persons, with no need for us to be concerned about the real identity or diversity of substance or even about what would appear to other people, what is to prevent us from saying that these two persons who are at the same time in these two similar but inexpressibly distant spheres, are one and the same person? Yet that would be a manifest absurdity. I will add

[1] Taking '*conscienciosité*' to be a slip for '*consciosité*'.

that if we are speaking of what can naturally occur, the two similar spheres and the two similar souls on them could remain similar only for a time. Since they would be numerically different, there would have to be a difference at least in their insensible constitutions, and the latter must unfold in the fullness of time.

PHIL. **§26.** 'Supposing a man punished now, for what he had done in another life, whereof he could be made to have no consciousness at all, what difference is there between' such treatment and the treatment he would get in being created miserable?

THEO. Platonists, Origenists, certain Hebrews and other defenders of the pre-existence of souls have believed that the souls of this world were put into imperfect bodies to make them suffer for crimes committed in a former world. But the fact is that if one does not know the truth of the matter, and will never find it out either by recalling it through memory or from traces or from what other people know, it cannot be called punishment according to the ordinary way of thinking. If we are to speak quite generally of punishment, however, there are grounds for questioning whether it is absolutely necessary that those who suffer should themselves eventually learn why, and whether it would not quite often be sufficient that those punishments should afford, to other and better informed Spirits, matter for glorifying divine justice. Still, it is more likely, at least in general, that the sufferers will learn why they suffer.

PHIL. **§§28–9.**[1] Perhaps, all things considered, you can agree with my author when he concludes his chapter on identity by saying that the question of whether 'the same man' remains is a question of name, depending on whether by 'a man' we understand just a rational spirit, or just a body of the form we call human, or, finally, a spirit united with such a body. On the first account, the spirit which is separated (from the coarse body at least) will still be a man; on the second, an orang-outang which was exactly like us apart from reason would be a man, and if a man were deprived of his rational soul and given the soul of a beast he would remain the same man. On the third account both must remain, still united to one another: the same spirit, and the same body too in part – or at least its equivalent as regards sensible bodily form. Thus one could remain the same being *physically and morally, that is the same substance and the same person, without remaining a man, if we follow the third account in regarding this shape as essential to the identity of the man.

THEO. I admit that there is a question of name involved here. And the third account is like the same animal being at one time a caterpillar or silk-worm and at another a butterfly; or, as some have imagined, the angels of this

[1] This paragraph is very loosely based upon Locke.

world having been men in a former world. But we have met to discuss more important matters than the signification of words. I have shown you the basis of true physical identity, and have shown that it does not clash with moral identity or with memory either. And I have also shown that although they [sc. moral identity and memory][1] cannot always indicate a person's physical identity either to the person in question or to his acquaintances, they never run counter to physical identity and are never totally divorced from it. Finally, I have shown that there are always created spirits who know or can know the truth of the matter, and that there is reason to think that things which make no difference from the point of view of the persons themselves will do so only temporarily.

Chapter xxviii
Of certain 'other relations', especially moral relations.

PHILALETHES. **§1.** Besides the relations founded upon time, place, and causality, which we have just been discussing, there are 'infinite others, some whereof I shall mention. [Any simple idea which is] capable of parts or degrees, affords an occasion of comparing the subjects wherein it is . . . , v.g. *whiter*' or less white or equally white.[2] This relation may be called 'proportional'.

THEOPHILUS. But there is a way in which one thing can be greater than another although they are not proportional. They then differ by what I call an 'imperfect' magnitude. An example is provided when it is said that the angle which a radius makes with the arc of its circle is less than a right angle; for it is impossible for those two angles to stand in any proportion to one another, or for either of them to stand in any proportion to the angle of contingence, i.e. the difference between them.

PHIL. **§2.** 'Another occasion of comparing things [is provided by] the circumstances of their origin', upon which are founded the relations father
248 and child, brothers, cousins, compatriots. It would hardly occur to any speaker of our language to say: this bull is the grandfather of that calf, or these two pigeons are first cousins. That is because languages are adapted for common use. But 'in some countries . . . , where they are more careful of the pedigrees of their horses, than of their own, . . . they . . . have not only names for particular horses, but also of their several relations of kindred one to another.'

THEO. The ideas and names pertaining to family could be brought in here, along with those of kindred. In fact, there is no evidence that under the Empire of Charlemagne, or for a good while before and after, there were any family names in Germany or France or Lombardy. It was not so long

[1] Taking '*elles*' to be a slip for '*ils*'. [2] Added by Leibniz.

ago that some families in the north, including noble ones, had no name; so that a man was identified in the place of his birth by the use of his name and his father's, and if he moved to somewhere else the name of his place of origin was added to his own. The Arabs and the Turcomans still use that system, I understand. They have virtually no names for individual families, so they are content to use the name of the person's father, grandfather etc.; and they also honour their prize horses in this way, naming each by its own name and its father's name and even further back. That is how the horses were spoken of which the Turkish Monarch sent to the Emperor after the peace of Carlowitz. And the last Count of Oldenburg, now dead after a long life but in his time the owner of studs which were famous, had genealogical trees of his horses so that he could prove their 'nobility'; and he even went to the lengths of having portraits of their ancestors – like the *imagines majorum* [effigies of one's forebears] which were so prized by the Romans. But to return to mankind: the Arabs and the Tartars have names for *Tribes*, which are like enormous families which have increased tremendously through the years. Some of these names are taken from the progenitor of the tribe, just as in Moses' time; others come from the place where the tribe lives, or from some other circumstance. Mr Worsley, an observant traveller who has spent some time in desert Arabia and is well informed about the present state of things there, tells us that in the whole region between Egypt and Palestine – the region which Moses crossed – there are today only three tribes, which might run to five thousand men altogether; and that one of these tribes is called Salih, after its founder (I understand), whose tomb his descendants revere as though it were that of a saint, by collecting the dust from it which they sprinkle Arab-fashion on their own heads and on those of their camels. It remains to say that 'blood-relationship' is what you have when the two people whose relationship is in question have a common origin, and one could say that alliance or affinity[1] is what obtains between two people if they can be blood-related to some one person without thereby being blood-related to one another – which can happen through the intervention of marriages. But affinity is not ordinarily said to obtain between husband and wife, although their marriage causes affinities between others; so perhaps it would be better to say that affinity is what obtains between two people who would be blood-related if some husband and wife were taken to be a single person.

PHIL. **§3.** Sometimes a relationship is founded on a 'moral right': the relationship of General of an army, for instance, or that of citizen. These relations, since they depend upon agreements that men have made among

[1] '*alliance ou affinité*', each word meaning a relatedness between two people because of intermarriage between their families.