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AN ESSAY CONCERNING HUMAN UNDERSTANDING

PENGU

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BOOK III: OF WORDS

CHAPTER I

Of Words or Language in General

Man fitted to form articulate sounds

§1. God having designed man for a sociable creature, made him not only with an inclination, and under a necessity to have fellowship with those of his own kind; but furnished him also with language, which was to be the great instrument, and common tie of society. *Man* therefore had by nature his organs so fashioned, as to be *fit to frame articulate sounds*, which we call words. But this was not enough to produce language; for parrots, and several other birds, will be taught to make articulate sounds distinct enough, which yet, by no means, are capable of language.

To make them signs of ideas

§2. Besides articulate sounds therefore, it was further necessary, that he should be *able to use these sounds, as signs of internal conceptions*; and to make them stand as marks for the ideas within his own mind, whereby they might be made known to others, and the thoughts of men's minds be conveyed from one to another.

To make general signs

§3. But neither was this sufficient to make words so useful as they ought to be. It is not enough for the perfection of language, that sounds can be made signs of ideas, unless those *signs* can be so made use of, as *to comprehend several particular things*: for the multiplication of words would have perplexed their use, had every particular thing need of a distinct name to be signified by. To remedy this inconvenience, language had yet a further improvement in the use of general terms, whereby one word was made to mark a multitude of particular existences: which advantageous use of sounds was obtained only by the difference of the ideas they were made signs of. Those names becoming general, which are made to stand for general ideas, and those remaining particular, where the ideas they are used for are particular.

§4. Besides these names which stand for ideas, there be other words which men make use of, not to signify any idea, but the want or absence of some ideas simple or complex, or all ideas together; such as are the *nihil*[1] in Latin, and in English, *ignorance* and *barrenness*. All which negative or

privative words, cannot be said properly to belong to, or signify no ideas: for then they would be perfectly insignificant sounds; but they relate to positive ideas, and signify their absence.

Words ultimately derived from such as signify sensible ideas

§5. It may also lead us a little towards the original of all our notions and knowledge, if we remark, how great a dependence our *words* have on common sensible ideas; and how those, which are made use of to stand for actions and notions quite removed from sense, *have their rise from thence, and from obvious sensible ideas are transferred to more abstruse significations*, and made to stand for ideas that come not under the cognizance of our senses; *v.g.* to *imagine*, *apprehend*, *comprehend*, *adhere*, *conceive*, *instil*, *disgust*, *disturbance*, *tranquillity*, etc. are all words taken from the operations of sensible things, and applied to certain modes of thinking. *Spirit*, in its primary signification, is breath; *angel*, a messenger: and I doubt not, but if we could trace them to their sources, we should find, in all languages, the names, which stand for things that fall not under our senses, to have had their first rise from sensible ideas. By which we may give some kind of guess, what kind of notions they were, and whence derived, which filled their minds, who were the first beginners of languages; and how nature, even in the naming of things, unawares suggested to men the originals and principles of all their knowledge: whilst, to give names, that might make known to others any operations they felt in themselves, or any other ideas, that came not under their senses, they were fain to borrow words from ordinary known ideas of sensation, by that means to make others the more easily to conceive those operations they experimented in themselves, which made no outward sensible appearances; and then when they had got known and agreed names, to signify those internal operations of their own minds, they were sufficiently furnished to make known by words, all their other ideas; since they could consist of nothing, but either of outward sensible perceptions, or of the inward operations of their minds about them; we having, as has been proved, no ideas at all, but what originally come either from sensible objects without, or what we feel within ourselves, from the inward workings of our own spirits, which we are conscious to ourselves of within.

Distribution

§6. But to understand better the use and force of language, as subservient to instruction and knowledge, it will be convenient to consider,

First, to what it is that names, in the use of language, are immediately applied.

Secondly, since all (except proper) names are general, and so stand not

particularly for this or that single thing; but for sorts and ranks of things, it will be necessary to consider, in the next place, what the sorts and kinds, or, if you rather like the Latin names, *what the species and genera of things* are; wherein they consist; and how they come to be made. These being (as they ought) well looked into, we shall the better come to find the right use of words; the natural advantages and defects of language; and the remedies that ought to be used, to avoid the inconveniencies of obscurity or uncertainty in the signification of words, without which, it is impossible to discourse with any clearness, or order, concerning knowledge: which being conversant about propositions, and those most commonly universal ones, has greater connexion with words, than perhaps is suspected.

These considerations therefore, shall be the matter of the following chapters.

CHAPTER II

Of the Signification of Words

Words are sensible signs necessary for communication

§1. Man, though he have great variety of thoughts, and such, from which others, as well as himself, might receive profit and delight; yet they are all within his own breast, invisible, and hidden from others, nor can of themselves be made appear. The comfort, and advantage of society, not being to be had without communication of thoughts, it was necessary, that man should find out some external sensible signs, whereby those invisible ideas, which his thoughts are made up of, might be made known to others. For this purpose, nothing was so fit, either for plenty or quickness, as those articulate sounds, which with so much ease and variety, he found himself able to make. Thus we may conceive how *words*, which were by nature so well adapted to that purpose, come to be made use of by men, as the *signs of* their *ideas*; not by any natural connexion, that there is between particular articulate sounds and certain ideas, for then there would be but one language amongst all men; but by a voluntary imposition, whereby such a word is made arbitrarily the mark of such an idea. The use then of words, is to be sensible marks of ideas; and the ideas they stand for, are their proper and immediate signification.

Words are the sensible signs of his ideas who uses them

§2. The use men have of these marks, being either to record their own thoughts for the assistance of their own memory; or, as it were, to bring out their ideas, and lay them before the view of others: *words in their primary or immediate signification, stand for nothing, but the ideas in the mind of him that uses them*, how imperfectly soever, or carelessly those ideas are collected from the things, which they are supposed to represent. When a man speaks to another, it is, that he may be understood; and the end of speech is, that those sounds, as marks, may make known his ideas to the hearer. That then which words are the marks of, are the ideas of the speaker: nor can anyone apply them, as marks, immediately to anything else, but the ideas, that he himself hath: for this would be to make them signs of his own conceptions, and yet apply them to other ideas; which would be to make them signs, and not signs of his ideas at the same time; and so in effect, to have no signification at all. Words being voluntary signs, they cannot be voluntary signs imposed by him on things he knows not. That would be to make them signs of nothing, sounds without signification. A man cannot make his words the signs either of qualities in things, or of conceptions in the mind of another, whereof he has none in his own. Till he has some ideas of his own, he cannot suppose them to correspond with the conceptions of another man; nor can he use any signs for them: for thus they would be the signs of he knows not what, which is in truth to be the signs of nothing. But when he represents to himself other men's ideas, by some of his own, if he consent to give them the same names, that other men do, 'tis still to his own ideas; to ideas that he has, and not to ideas that he has not.

§3. This is so necessary in the use of language, that in this respect, the knowing, and the ignorant; the learned, and unlearned, use the *words* they speak (with any meaning) all alike. They, *in every man's mouth, stand for the ideas he has*, and which he would express by them. A child having taken notice of nothing in the metal he hears called gold, but the bright shining yellow colour, he applies the word gold only to his own idea of that colour, and nothing else; and therefore calls the same colour in a peacock's tail, gold. Another that hath better observed, adds to shining yellow, great weight: and then the sound gold, when he uses it, stands for a complex idea of a shining yellow and very weighty substance. Another adds to those qualities, fusibility: and then the word gold to him signifies a body, bright, yellow, fusible, and very heavy. Another adds malleability. Each of these uses equally the word gold, when they have occasion to express the idea,

which they have applied it to: but it is evident, that each can apply it only to his own idea; nor can he make it stand, as a sign of such a complex idea, as he has not.

Words often secretly referred, first, to the ideas in other men's minds

§4. But though words, as they are used by men, can properly and immediately signify nothing but the ideas, that are in the mind of the speaker; yet they in their thoughts give them a secret reference to two other things.

First, they suppose their words to be marks of the ideas in the minds also of other men, with whom they communicate: for else they should talk in vain, and could not be understood, if the sounds they applied to one idea, were such, as by the hearer, were applied to another, which is to speak two languages. But in this, men stand not usually to examine, whether the idea they, and those they discourse with have in their minds, be the same: but think it enough, that they use the word, as they imagine, in the common acceptation of that language; in which they suppose, that the idea, they make it a sign of, is precisely the same, to which the understanding men of that country apply that name.

Secondly, to the reality of things

§5. *Secondly*, because *men* would not be thought to talk *barely* of their own imaginations, but of things as really they are; therefore they *often suppose their words to stand also for the reality of things*. But this relating more particularly to substances, and their names, as perhaps the former does to simple ideas and modes, we shall speak of these two different ways of applying words more at large, when we come to treat of the names of mixed modes, and substances, in particular: though give me leave here to say, that it is a perverting the use of words, and brings unavoidable obscurity and confusion into their signification, whenever we make them stand for anything, but those ideas we have in our own minds.

Words by use readily excite ideas

§6. Concerning words also it is further to be considered: *first*, that they being immediately the signs of men's ideas; and, by that means, the instruments whereby men communicate their conceptions, and express to one another those thoughts and imaginations, they have within their own breasts, *there comes by constant use*, to be such *a connexion between certain sounds, and the ideas they stand for*, that the names heard, almost as readily excite certain ideas, as if the objects themselves, which are apt to produce them, did actually affect the senses. Which is manifestly so in all obvious sensible qualities; and in all substances, that frequently, and familiarly occur to us.

Words often used without signification

§7. *Secondly*, that though the proper and immediate signification of words, are ideas in the mind of the speaker; yet because by familiar use from our cradles, we come to learn certain articulate sounds very perfectly, and have them readily on our tongues, and always at hand in our memories; but yet are not always careful to examine, or settle their significations perfectly, it *often* happens that *men*, even when they would apply themselves to an attentive consideration, do *set their thoughts more on words than things*. Nay, because words are many of them learned, before the ideas are known for which they stand: therefore some, not only children, but men, speak several words, no otherwise than parrots do, only because they have learned them, and have been accustomed to those sounds. But so far as words are of use and signification, so far is there a constant connexion between the sound and the idea; and a designation, that the one stand for the other: without which application of them, they are nothing but so much insignificant noise.

Their signification perfectly arbitrary

§8. *Words* by long and familiar use, as has been said, come to excite in men certain ideas, so constantly and readily, that they are apt to suppose a natural connexion between them. But that they *signify* only men's peculiar ideas, and that *by a perfectly arbitrary imposition*, is evident, in that they often fail to excite in others (even that use the same language) the same ideas, we take them to be the signs of: and every man has so inviolable a liberty, to make words stand for what ideas he pleases, that no one hath the power to make others have the same ideas in their minds, that he has, when they use the same words, that he does. And therefore the great Augustus[1] himself, in the possession of that power which ruled the world, acknowledged, he could not make a new Latin word: which was as much as to say, that he could not arbitrarily appoint, what idea any sound should be a sign of, in the mouths and common language of his subjects. 'Tis true, common use, by a tacit consent, appropriates certain sounds to certain ideas in all languages, which so far limits the signification of that sound, that unless a man applies it to the same idea, he does not speak properly: and let me add, that unless a man's words excite the same ideas in the hearer, which he makes them stand for in speaking, he does not speak intelligibly. But whatever be the consequence of any man's using of words differently, either from their general meaning, or the particular sense of the person to whom he addresses them, this is certain, their signification, in his use of them, is limited to his ideas, and they can be signs of nothing else.

CHAPTER III

Of General Terms

The greatest part of words general

§1. All things, that exist, being particulars, it may perhaps be thought reasonable that words, which ought to be conformed to things, should be so too, I mean in their signification: but yet we find the quite contrary. The far *greatest part of words*, that make all languages, *are general terms*: which has not been the effect of neglect, or chance, but of reason, and necessity.

For every particular thing to have a name is impossible

§2. First, *it is impossible, that every particular thing should have a distinct peculiar name.* For the signification and use of words, depending on that connexion, which the mind makes between its ideas, and the sounds it uses as signs of them, it is necessary, in the application of names to things, that the mind should have distinct ideas of the things, and retain also the particular name that belongs to every one, with its peculiar appropriation to that idea. But it is beyond the power of human capacity to frame and retain distinct ideas of all the particular things we meet with: every bird, and beast men saw; every tree, and plant, that affected the senses, could not find a place in the most capacious understanding. If it be looked on, as an instance of a prodigious memory, that some generals have been able to call every soldier in their army, by his proper name: we may easily find a reason, why men have never attempted to give names to each sheep in their flock, or crow that flies over their heads; much less to call every leaf of plants, or grain of sand that came in their way, by a peculiar name.

And useless

§3. *Secondly*, if it were possible, *it would yet be useless*; because it would not serve to the chief end of language. Men would in vain heap up names of particular things, that would not serve them to communicate their thoughts. Men learn names, and use them in talk with others, only that they may be understood: which is then only done, when by use or consent, the sound I make by the organs of speech, excites in another man's mind, who hears it, the idea I apply it to in mine, when I speak it. This cannot be done by names, applied to particular things, whereof I alone having the ideas in my mind, the names of them could not be significant, or intelligible to another, who was not acquainted with all those very particular things, which had fallen under my notice.

§4. *Thirdly*, but yet granting this also feasible; (which I think is not,) yet *a distinct name for every particular things, would not be of any great use for the improvement of knowledge*: which though founded in particular things, enlarges itself by general views; to which, things reduced into sorts under general names, are properly subservient. These, with the names belonging to them, come within some compass, and do not multiply every moment, beyond what, either the mind can contain, or use requires. And therefore in these, men have for the most part stopped: but yet not so, as to hinder themselves from distinguishing particular things, by appropriated names, where convenience demands it. And therefore in their own species, which they have most to do with, and wherein they have often occasion to mention particular persons; they make use of proper names, and there distinct individuals have distinct denominations.

What things have proper names

§5. Besides persons, countries also, cities, rivers, mountains, and other the like distinctions of place, have usually found peculiar names, and that for the same reason; they being such as men have often an occasion to mark particularly, and, as it were, set before others in their discourses with them. And I doubt not, but if we had reason to mention particular horses, as often as we have to mention particular men, we should have *proper names* for the one, as familiar as for the other; and *Bucephalus*[1] would be a word as much in use, as *Alexander*. And therefore we see that amongst jockeys,[2] horses have their proper names to be known and distinguished by, as commonly as their servants: because amongst them, there is often occasion to mention this or that particular horse, when he is out of sight.

How general words are made

§6. The next thing to be considered is, *how general words come to be made*. For since all things that exist are only particulars, how come we by general terms, or where find we those general natures they are supposed to stand for? Words become general, by being made the signs of general ideas: and ideas become general, by separating from them the circumstances of time, and place, and any other ideas, that may determine them to this or that particular existence. By this way of abstraction they are made capable of representing more individuals than one; each of which, having in it a conformity to that abstract idea, is (as we call it) of that sort.

§7. But to deduce this a little more distinctly, it will not perhaps be amiss, to trace our notions, and names, from their beginning, and observe by what degrees we proceed, and by what steps we enlarge our ideas from our first

infancy. There is nothing more evident, than that the ideas of the persons children converse with, (to instance in them alone) are like the persons themselves, only particular. The idea of the nurse, and the mother, are well framed in their minds; and, like pictures of them there, represent only those individuals. The names they first gave to them, are confined to these individuals; and the names of *Nurse* and *Mamma*, the child uses, determine themselves to those persons. Afterwards, when time and a larger acquaintance has made them observe, that there are a great many other things in the world, that in some common agreements of shape, and several other qualities, resemble their father and mother, and those persons they have been used to, they frame an idea, which they find those many particulars do partake in; and to that they give, with others, the name *man* for example. And *thus they come to have a general name*, and a general idea. Wherein they make nothing new, but only leave out of the complex idea they had of *Peter* and *James*, *Mary* and *Jane*, that which is peculiar to each, and retain only what is common to them all.

§8. By the same way, that they come by the general name and idea of *man*, they easily *advance to more general names* and notions. For observing, that several things that differ from their idea of *man*, and cannot therefore be comprehended under that name, have yet certain qualities, wherein they agree with *man*, by retaining only those qualities, and uniting them into one idea, they have again another and a more general idea; to which having given a name, they make a term of a more comprehensive extension: which new idea is made, not by any new addition, but only, as before, by leaving out the shape, and some other properties signified by the name *man*, and retaining only a body, with life, sense, and spontaneous motion, comprehended under the name *animal*.

General natures are nothing but abstract ideas

§9. That this is the *way, whereby men first formed general ideas, and general names to them*, I think, is so evident, that there needs no other proof of it, but the considering of a man's self, or others, and the ordinary proceedings of their minds in knowledge: and he that thinks general natures or notions, are anything else but such abstract and partial ideas of more complex ones, taken at first from particular existences, will, I fear, be at a loss where to find them. For let anyone reflect, and then tell me, wherein does his idea of *man* differ from that of *Peter*, and *Paul*; or his idea of *horse*, from that of *Bucephalus*, but in the leaving out something, that is peculiar to each individual; and retaining so much of those particular complex ideas, of several particular existences, as they are found to agree

in? Of the complex ideas, signified by the names *man*, and *horse*, leaving out but those particulars wherein they differ, and retaining only those wherein they agree, and of those, making a new distinct complex idea, and giving the name *animal* to it, one has a more general term, that comprehends, with man, several other creatures. Leave out of the idea of *animal*, sense and spontaneous motion, and the remaining complex idea, made up of the remaining simple ones of body, life, and nourishment, becomes a more general one, under the more comprehensive term, *vivens*.[3] And not to dwell longer upon this particular, so evident in itself, by the same way the mind proceeds to *body*, *substance*, and at last to *being*, *thing*, and such universal terms, which stand for any of our ideas whatsoever. To conclude, this whole *mystery* of *genera* and *species*, which make such a noise in the Schools, and are, with justice, so little regarded out of them, is nothing else but abstract ideas, more or less comprehensive, with names annexed to them. In all which, this is constant and unvariable, that every more general term, stands for such an idea, as is but a part of any of those contained under it.

Why the genus is ordinarily made use of in definitions

§10. This may show us the reason, *why, in the defining of words*, which is nothing but declaring their signification, *we make use of the genus*, or next general word that comprehends it. Which is not out of necessity, but only to save the labour of enumerating the several simple ideas, which the next general word or *genus*, stands for; or, perhaps, sometimes the shame of not being able to do it. But though defining by *genus* and *differentia*,[4] (I crave leave to use these terms of art, though originally Latin, since they most properly suit those notions they are applied to;) I say, though defining by the *genus* be the shortest way; yet, I think, it may be doubted, whether it be the best. This I am sure, it is not the only, and so not absolutely necessary. For definition being nothing but making another understand by words, what idea, the term defined stands for, a definition is best made by enumerating those simple ideas that are combined in the signification of the term defined: and if instead of such an enumeration, men have accustomed themselves to use the next general term, it has not been out of necessity, or for greater clearness; but for quickness and dispatch sake. For, I think, that to one who desired to know what idea the word *man* stood for; if it should be said, that *man* was a solid extended substance, having life, sense, spontaneous motion, and the faculty of reasoning, I doubt not but the meaning of the term *man*, would be as well understood, and the idea it stands for, be at least as clearly made

known, as when it is defined to be a *rational animal*; which by the several definitions of *animal*, *vivens*, and *corpus*,[5] resolves itself into those enumerated ideas. I have in explaining the term *man*, followed here the ordinary definition of the Schools:[6] which though, perhaps, not the most exact, yet serves well enough to my present purpose. And one may in this instance, see what gave occasion to the rule, that a definition must consist of *genus*, and *differentia*: and it suffices to show us the little necessity there is of such a rule, or advantage in the strict observing of it. For definitions, as has been said, being only the explaining of one word, by several others, so that the meaning, or idea it stands for, may be certainly known, languages are not always so made, according to the rules of logic, that every term can have its signification, exactly and clearly expressed by two others. Experience sufficiently satisfies us to the contrary; or else those who have made this rule, have done ill, that they have given us so few definitions conformable to it. But of definitions, more in the next chapter.

General and universal are creatures of the understanding

§11. To return to general words, it is plain, by what has been said, that *general and universal*, belong not to the real existence of things; but *are the inventions* and *creatures of the understanding*, made by it for its own use, *and concern only signs*, whether words, or ideas. Words are general, as has been said, when used, for signs of general ideas; and so are applicable indifferently to many particular things; and ideas, are general, when they are set up, as the representatives of many particular things: but universality belongs not to things themselves, which are all of them particular in their existence, even those words, and ideas, which in their signification, are general. When therefore we quit particulars, the generals that rest, are only creatures of our own making, their general nature being nothing but the capacity they are put into by the understanding, of signifying or representing many particulars. For the signification they have, is nothing but a relation, that by the mind of man is added to them.[G]

Abstract ideas are the essences of the genera and species

§12. The next thing therefore to be considered, is, *what kind of signification it is, that general words have*. For as it is evident, that they do not signify barely one particular thing; for then they would not be general terms, but proper names; so on the other side, 'tis as evident, they do not signify a plurality; for man and men would then signify the same; and the distinction of numbers (as grammarians call them) would be superfluous and useless. That then which general words signify, is a sort of things; and each of them does that, by being a sign of an abstract idea in the mind, to which idea, as things existing are found to

agree, so they come to be ranked under that name; or, which is all one, be of that sort. Whereby it is evident, that the *essences of* the *sorts, or* (if the Latin word pleases better) *species* of things, are nothing else but these abstract ideas. For the having the essence of any species, being that which makes anything to be of that species, and the conformity to the idea, to which the name is annexed, being that which gives a right to that name, the having the essence, and the having that conformity, must needs be the same thing: since to be of any species, and to have a right to the name of that species, is all one. As for example, to be a *man*, or of the species *man*, and to have right to the name *man*, is the same thing. Again, to be a *man*, or of the same species *man*, and have the essence of a *man*, is the same thing. Now since nothing can be a *man*, or have a right to the name *man*, but what has a conformity to the abstract idea the name *man* stands for; nor anything be a man, or have a right to the species *man*, but what has the essence of that species, it follows, that the abstract idea, for which the name stands, and the essence of the species, is one and the same. From whence it is easy to observe, that the essences of the sorts of things, and consequently the sorting of things, is the workmanship of the understanding that abstracts and makes those general ideas.

They are the workmanship of the understanding, but have their foundation in the similitude of things

§13. I would not here be thought to forget, much less to deny, that nature in the production of things, makes several of them alike: there is nothing more obvious, especially in the races of animals, and all things propagated by seed. But yet, I think, we may say, the *sorting* of them under names, *is the workmanship of the understanding, taking occasion from the similitude* it observes amongst them, to make abstract general ideas, and set them up in the mind, with names annexed to them, as patterns or forms, (for in that sense the word form has a very proper signification,) to which, as particular things existing are found to agree, so they come to be of that species, have that denomination, or are put into that *classis*. For when we say, this is a *man*, that a *horse*; this *justice*, that *cruelty*; this a *watch*, that a *jack*;[7] what do we else but rank things under different specific names, as agreeing to those abstract ideas, of which we have made those names the signs? And what are the essences of those species, set out and marked by names, but those abstract ideas in the mind; which are, as it were, the bonds between particular things that exist, and the names they are to be ranked under? And when general names have any connexion with particular beings, these abstract ideas are the *medium* that unites them: so that the essences of species,

as distinguished and denominated by us, neither are, nor can be anything but those precise abstract ideas we have in our minds. And therefore the supposed real essences of substances, if different from our abstract ideas, cannot be the essences of the species we rank things into. For two species may be one, as rationally, as two different essences be the essence of one species: and I demand, what are the alterations may, or may not be in a *horse*, or *lead*, without making either of them to be of another species? In determining the species of things by our abstract ideas, this is easy to resolve: but if anyone will regulate himself herein, by supposed real essences, he will, I suppose, be at a loss: and he will never be able to know when anything precisely ceases to be of the species of a *horse*, or *lead*.

Each distinct abstract idea is a distinct essence

§14. Nor will anyone wonder, that I say these *essences*, or abstract ideas, (which are the measures of name, and the boundaries of species) are *the workmanship of the understanding*, who considers, that at least the complex ones are often, in several men, different collections of simple ideas: and therefore that is *covetousness* to one man, which is not so to another. Nay, even in substances, where their abstract ideas seem to be taken from the things themselves, they are not constantly the same; no not in that species, which is most familiar to us, and with which we have the most intimate acquaintance: it having been more than once doubted, whether the *fœtus* born of a woman were a *man*, even so far, as that it hath been debated, whether it were, or were not to be nourished and baptized: which could not be, if the abstract idea or essence, to which the name man belonged, were of nature's making; and were not the uncertain and various collection of simple ideas, which the understanding puts together, and then abstracting it, affixed a name to it. So that in truth *every distinct abstract idea, is a distinct essence*: and the names that stand for such distinct ideas, are the names of things essentially different. Thus a circle is as essentially different from an oval, as a sheep from a goat: and rain is as essentially different from snow, as water from earth, that abstract idea which is the essence of one, being impossible to be communicated to the other. And thus any two abstract ideas, that in any part vary one from another, with two distinct names annexed to them, constitute two distinct sorts, or, if you please, *species*, as essentially different, as any two the most remote, or opposite in the world.

Real and nominal essence

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

First, essence may be taken for the very being of anything, whereby it is,

what it is. And thus the real internal, but generally in substances, unknown constitution of things, whereon their discoverable qualities depend, may be called their *essence*. This is the proper original signification of the word, as is evident from the formation of it; *essentia*, in its primary notation signifying properly *being*. And in this sense it is still used, when we speak of the *essence* of particular things, without giving them any name.

Secondly, the learning and disputes of the Schools, having been much busied about *genus* and *species*, the word *essence* has almost lost its primary signification;[8] and instead of the real constitution of things, has been almost wholly applied to the artificial constitution of *genus* and *species*. 'Tis true, there is ordinarily supposed a real constitution of the sorts of things; and 'tis past doubt, there must be some real constitution, on which any collection of simple ideas co-existing, must depend. But it being evident, that things are ranked under names into sorts or *species*, only as they agree to certain abstract ideas, to which we have annexed those names, the *essence* of each *genus*, or sort, comes to be nothing but that abstract idea, which the general, or *sortal* (if I may have leave so to call it from *sort*, as I do *general* from *genus*,) name stands for. And this we shall find to be that, which the word *essence* imports, in its most familiar use. These two sorts of *essences*, I suppose, may not unfitly be termed, the one the *real*, the other the *nominal essence*.

Constant connexion between the name and nominal essence

§16. *Between the nominal essence, and the name*, there is so *near* a *connexion*, that the name of any sort of things cannot be attributed to any particular being, but what has this essence, whereby it answers that abstract idea, whereof that name is the sign.

Supposition that species are distinguished by their real essences, useless

§17. Concerning the real essences of corporeal substances, (to mention those only,) there are, if I mistake not, two opinions. The one is of those, who using the word *essence*, for they know not what, suppose a certain number of those essences, according to which, all natural things are made, and wherein they do exactly every one of them partake, and so become of this or that species. The other, and more rational opinion, is of those, who look on all natural things to have a real, but unknown constitution of their insensible parts, from which flow those sensible qualities, which serve us to distinguish them one from another, according as we have occasion to rank them into sorts, under common denominations. The former of these opinions, which supposes these essences, as a certain number of forms or moulds, wherein all natural things, that exist, are cast, and do equally partake, has, I imagine, very much perplexed the knowledge of natural things. The frequent

productions of monsters, in all the species of animals, and of changelings,[9] and other strange issues of human birth, carry with them difficulties, not possible to consist with this hypothesis: since it is as impossible, that two things, partaking exactly of the same real essence, should have different properties, as that two figures partaking in the same real essence of a circle, should have different properties. But were there no other reason against it, yet the *supposition of essences, that cannot be known*; and the making them nevertheless to be that, which distinguishes the species of things, *is* so *wholly useless*, and unserviceable to any part of our knowledge, that that alone were sufficient, to make us lay it by; and content ourselves with such essences of the sorts or species of things, as come within the reach of our knowledge: which, when seriously considered, will be found, as I have said, to be nothing else, but those abstract complex ideas, to which we have annexed distinct general names.

Real and nominal essence the same in simple ideas and modes, different in substances

§18. *Essences* being thus distinguished into *nominal and real*, we may further observe, that *in* the species of *simple ideas and modes*, they *are always the same*: but *in substances, always quite different*. Thus a figure including a space between three lines, is the real, as well as nominal essence of a triangle; it being not only the abstract idea to which the general name is annexed, but the very *essentia*, or being, of the thing itself, that foundation from which all its properties flow, and to which they are all inseparably annexed. But it is far otherwise concerning that parcel of matter, which makes the ring on my finger, wherein these two essences are apparently different. For it is the real constitution of its insensible parts, on which depend all those properties of colour, weight, fusibility, fixedness,[10] *etc.* which makes it to be *gold*, or gives it a right to that name, which is therefore its nominal essence. Since nothing can be called *gold*, but what has a conformity of qualities to that abstract complex idea, to which that name is annexed. But this distinction of *essences*, belonging particularly to substances, we shall, when we come to consider their names, have an occasion to treat of more fully.

Essences ingenerable and incorruptible

§19. That such *abstract ideas, with names to them*, as we have been speaking of, *are essences*, may further appear by what we are told concerning *essences, viz.* that they are all ingenerable, and incorruptible. Which cannot be true of the real constitutions of things, which begin and perish with them. All things, that exist, besides their Author, are all liable to change; especially those things we are acquainted with, and have ranked into bands, under distinct names or ensigns.[11] Thus

that, which was grass today, is tomorrow the flesh of a sheep; and within few days after, becomes part of a man: in all which, and the like changes, 'tis evident, their real essence, *i.e.* that constitution, whereon the properties of these several things depended, is destroyed, and perishes with them. But essences being taken for ideas, established in the mind, with names annexed to them, they are supposed to remain steadily the same, whatever mutations the particular substances are liable to. For whatever becomes of Alexander and Bucephalus, the ideas to which *man* and *horse* are annexed, are supposed nevertheless to remain the same; and so the essences of those species are preserved whole and undestroyed, whatever changes happen to any, or all of the individuals of those species. By this means the essence of a species rests safe and entire, without the existence of so much as one individual of that kind. For were there now no circle existing anywhere in the world, (as, perhaps, that figure exists not anywhere exactly marked out,) yet the idea annexed to that name would not cease to be what it is; nor cease to be as a pattern, to determine which of the particular figures we meet with, have, or have not a right to the name *circle*, and so to show, which of them, by having that essence, was of that species. And though there neither were, nor had been in nature such a beast as an *unicorn*, nor such a fish as a *mermaid*; yet supposing those names to stand for complex abstract ideas, that contained no inconsistency in them; the essence of a *mermaid* is as intelligible, as that of a *man*; and the idea of an *unicorn*, as certain, steady, and permanent, as that of a horse. From what has been said, it is evident, that the doctrine of the immutability of essences, proves them to be only abstract ideas; and is founded on the relation, established between them, and certain sounds as signs of them; and will always be true, as long as the same name can have the same signification.

Recapitulation §20. To conclude, this is that, which in short I would say, *viz.* that all the great business of *genera* and *species*, and their *essences*, amounts to no more but this, that men making abstract ideas, and settling them in their minds, with names annexed to them, do thereby enable themselves to consider things, and discourse of them, as it were in bundles, for the easier and readier improvement, and communication of their knowledge, which would advance but slowly, were their words and thoughts confined only to particulars.

CHAPTER IV

Of the Names of Simple Ideas

Names of simple ideas, modes, and substances, have each something peculiar

§1. Though all words, as I have shown, signify nothing immediately, but the ideas in the mind of the speaker; yet upon a nearer survey, we shall find that the *names of simple ideas, mixed modes*, (under which I comprise relations too,) *and natural substances, have each of them something peculiar*, and different from the other. For example:

First, names of simple ideas and substances, intimate real existence

§2. *First*, the *names of simple ideas and substances*, with the abstract ideas in the mind, which they immediately signify, *intimate* also *some real existence*, from which was derived their original pattern. But the *names of mixed modes, terminate in the idea* that is in the mind, and lead not the thoughts any further, as we shall see more at large in the following chapter.

Secondly, names of simple ideas and modes signify always both real and nominal essence

§3. *Secondly*, the *names of simple ideas and modes, signify always the real, as well as nominal essence of their species*. But *the names of natural substances, signify* rarely, if ever, anything but *barely the nominal essences* of those species, as we shall show in the chapter, that treats of the names of substances in particular.

Thirdly, names of simple ideas undefinable

§4. *Thirdly*, the *names of simple ideas are not capable of any definitions*; the names of all complex ideas are. It has not, that I know, hitherto been taken notice of by anybody, what words are, and what are not capable of being defined: the want whereof is (as I am apt to think) not seldom the occasion of great wrangling,[1] and obscurity in men's discourses, whilst some demand definitions of terms, that cannot be defined; and others think, they ought to rest satisfied, in an explication made by a more general word, and its restriction, (or to speak in terms of art by a genus and difference,) when even after such definition made according to rule those who hear it, have often no more a clear conception of the meaning of the word, than they had before. This at least, I think, that the showing what words are, and what are not capable of definitions, and wherein consists a good definition, is not wholly besides our present purpose; and perhaps, will afford so much light to the nature of these signs, and our ideas, as to deserve a more particular consideration.

If all were definable, 'twould be a process in infinitum.

§5. I will not here trouble myself, to prove that all terms are not definable from that progress, *in infinitum*,[2] which it will visibly lead us into, if we should allow, that all names could be defined. For if the terms of one definition, were still to be defined by another, where at last should we stop? But I shall from the nature of our ideas, and the signification of our words show, *why some names can, and others cannot be defined*, and which they are.

What a definition is

§6. I think, it is agreed, that *a definition is* nothing else, but *the showing the meaning of one word by several other not synonymous terms*. The meaning of words being only the ideas they are made to stand for by him that uses them; the meaning of any term is then showed, or the word is defined when by other words, the idea it is made the sign of, and annexed to in the mind of the speaker, is as it were represented, or set before the view of another; and thus its signification ascertained: this is the only use and end of definitions; and therefore the only measure of what is, or is not a good definition.

Simple ideas, why undefinable

§7. This being premised, I say, that *the names of simple ideas*, and those only, *are incapable of being defined*. The reason whereof is this, that the several terms of a definition, signifying several ideas, they can altogether by no means represent an idea, which has no composition at all: and therefore a definition which is properly nothing but the showing the meaning of one word by several others not signifying each the same thing, can in the names of simple ideas have no place.

Instances motion

§8. The not observing this difference in our ideas, and their names, has produced that eminent trifling in the Schools, which is so easy to be observed, in the definitions they give us of some few of these simple ideas. For as to the greatest part of them, even those masters of definitions, were fain to leave them untouched, merely by the impossibility they found in it. What more exquisite jargon could the wit of man invent, than this definition, 'the act of a being in power, as far forth as in power', which would puzzle any rational man, to whom it was not already known by its famous absurdity, to guess what word it could ever be supposed to be the explication of. If Tully[3] asking a Dutchman what *beweeginge*[4] was, should have received this explication in his own language, that it was 'actus entis in potentia quatenus in potentia';[5] I ask whether anyone can imagine he could thereby have understood what the word *beweeginge* signified, or have guessed what idea a Dutchman ordinarily had in his mind, and would signify to another, when he used that sound.

§9. Nor have the modern philosophers,[6] who have endeavoured to throw off the jargon of the Schools, and speak intelligibly, much better succeeded in defining simple ideas, whether by explaining their causes, or any otherwise. The atomists, who define motion to be a *passage from one place to another*,[7] what do they more than put one synonymous word for another? For what is *passage* other than *motion*? And if they were asked what passage was, how would they better define it than by *motion*? For is it not at least as proper and significant, to say, 'passage is a motion from one place to another', as to say, 'motion is a passage', etc. This is to translate, and not to define, when we change two words of the same signification one for another; which when one is better understood than the other, may serve to discover what idea the unknown stands for; but is very far from a *definition*, unless we will say, every English word in the dictionary, is the definition of the Latin word it answers, and that motion is a definition of *motus*. *Nor will the successive application of the parts of the superficies of one body, to those of another*, which the Cartesians give us,[8] prove a much better definition of motion, when well examined.

Light

§10. 'The act of perspicuous, as far forth as perspicuous', is another Peripatetic[9] definition[10] of a simple idea; which though not more absurd than the former of *motion*, yet betrays its uselessness and insignificancy more plainly, because experience will easily convince anyone, that it cannot make the meaning of the word *light* (which it pretends to define) at all understood by a blind man: but the definition of *motion* appears not at first sight so useless, because it escapes this way of trial. For this simple idea, entering by the touch as well as sight; 'tis impossible to show an example of anyone, who has no other way to get the idea of *motion*, but barely by the definition of that name. Those who tell us, that *light* is a great number of little globules, striking briskly on the bottom of the eye,[11] speak more intelligibly than the Schools: but yet these words never so well understood, would make the idea, the word *light* stands for, no more known to a man that understands it not before, than if one should tell him, that *light* was nothing but a company of little tennis-balls, which fairies all day long struck with rackets against some men's foreheads, whilst they passed by others. For granting this explication of the thing to be true; yet the idea of the cause of *light*, if we had it never so exact, would no more give us the idea of *light* itself, as it is such a particular perception in us, than the idea of the figure and motion of a sharp piece of steel, would give us the idea of that pain, which it is able to cause in us. For the cause of any sensation, and the sensation itself, in

all the simple ideas of one sense, are two ideas; and two ideas so different, and distant one from another, that no two can be more so. And therefore should Descartes's globules strike never so long on the retina of a man, who was blind by a *gutta serena*,[12] he would thereby never have any idea of *light*, or anything approaching to it, though he understood what little globules were, and what striking on another body was, never so well. And therefore the Cartesians very well distinguish between that light which is the cause of that sensation in us, and the idea which is produced in us by it, and is that which is properly light.

Simple ideas why undefinable, further explained

§11. *Simple ideas*, as has been shown, *are only* to be *got by* those *impressions*, objects themselves make on our minds, by the proper inlets appointed to each sort. If they are not received this way, all the *words* in the world, *made use of to explain, or define any of their names, will never be able to produce in us the idea it stands for*. For words being sounds, can produce in us no other simple ideas, than of those very sounds; nor excite any in us, but by that voluntary connexion, which is known to be between them, and those simple ideas, which common use has made them signs of. He that thinks otherwise, let him try if any words can give him the taste of a pineapple,[13] and make him have the true idea of the relish of that celebrated delicious fruit. So far as he is told it has a resemblance with any tastes, whereof he has the ideas already in his memory, imprinted there by sensible objects not strangers to his palate, so far may he approach that resemblance in his mind. But this is not giving us that idea by a *definition*, but exciting in us other simple ideas, by their known names; which will be still very different from the true taste of that fruit itself. In light and colours, and all other simple ideas, it is the same thing: for the signification of sounds, is not natural, but only imposed and arbitrary. And no definition of *light* or *redness*, is more fitted, or able to produce either of those ideas in us, than the sound *light*, or *red*, by itself. For to hope to produce an idea of light, or colour, by a sound, however formed, is to expect that sounds should be visible, or colours audible; and to make the ears do the office of all the other senses. Which is all one as to say, that we might taste, smell, and see by the ears: a sort of philosophy worthy only of Sanco Panca, who had the faculty to see Dulcinea by hearsay.[14] And therefore he that has not before received into his mind, by the proper inlet, the simple idea which any word stands for, can never come to know the signification of that word, by any other words, or sounds, whatsoever put together, according to any rules of definition. The only way is, by applying

to his senses the proper object; and so producing that idea in him, for which he has learned the name already. A studious blind man, who had mightily beat his head about visible objects, and made use of the explication of his books and friends, to understand those names of light, and colours, which often came in his way; bragged one day, that he now understood what *scarlet* signified. Upon which his friend demanding, what *scarlet* was? the blind man answered, it was like the sound of a trumpet. Just such an understanding of the name of any other simple idea will he have, who hopes to get it only from a definition, or other words made use of to explain it.

The contrary showed in complex ideas by instances of a statue and rainbow

§12. The case is quite otherwise *in complex ideas*; which consisting of several simple ones, it is in the power of words, standing for the several ideas, that make that composition, to imprint complex ideas in the mind, which were never there before, and so make their names be understood. In such collections of ideas, passing under one name, *definitions*, or the teaching the signification of one word, by several others, has place, and *may make us understand the names* of things, which never came within the reach of our senses; and frame ideas suitable to those in other men's minds, when they use those names: provided that none of the terms of the definition stand for any such simple ideas, which he to whom the explication is made, has never yet had in his thought. Thus the word *statue* may be explained to a blind man by other words, when *picture* cannot, his senses having given him the idea of figure, but not of colours, which therefore words cannot excite in him. This gained the prize to the painter, against the statuary; each of which contending for the excellency of his art, and the statuary bragging, that his was to be preferred, because it reached further, and even those who had lost their eyes, could yet perceive the excellency of it. The painter agreed to refer himself to the judgement of a blind man; who being brought where there was a statue made by the one, and a picture drawn by the other; he was first led to the statue, in which he traced with his hands, all the lineaments of the face and body; and with great admiration, applauded the skill of the workman. But being led to the picture, and having his hands laid upon it, was told, that now he touched the head, and then the forehead, eyes, nose, *etc.* as his hand moved over the parts of the picture on the cloth, without finding any the least distinction: whereupon he cried out, that certainly that must needs be a very admirable and divine piece of workmanship, which could represent to them all those parts, where he could neither feel nor perceive anything.

§13. He that should use the word *rainbow*, to one who knew all those colours, but yet had never seen that phenomenon, would, by enumerating the figure, largeness, position, and order of the colours, so well define that word, that it might be perfectly understood. But yet that *definition*, how exact and perfect soever, would never make a blind man understand it; because several of the simple ideas that make that complex one, being such as he never received by sensation and experience, no words are able to excite them in his mind.

The names of complex ideas, when to be made intelligible by words

§14. Simple ideas, as has been showed, can only be got by experience, from those objects, which are proper to produce in us those perceptions. *When* by this means we have our minds stored with them, and know the names for them, then *we are in a condition to define*, and by *definition* to understand the names of complex ideas, that are made up of them. But when any term stands for a simple idea, that a man has never yet had in his mind, it is impossible, by any words, to make known its meaning to him. When any term stands for an idea a man is acquainted with, but is ignorant, that that term is the sign of it, there another name, of the same idea which he has been accustomed to, may make him understand its meaning. But in no case whatsoever, is any name, of any simple idea, capable of a *definition*.

Fourthly, names of simple ideas least doubtful

§15. *Fourthly*, but though the names of *simple ideas*, have not the help of *definition* to determine their signification; yet that hinders not but that they *are generally less doubtful and uncertain, than those of mixed modes and substances*. Because they standing only for one simple perception, men, for the most part, easily and perfectly agree in their signification: and there is little room for mistake and wrangling[15] about their meaning. He that knows once, that whiteness is the name of that colour he has observed in snow, or milk, will not be apt to misapply that word, as long as he retains that idea; which when he has quite lost, he is not apt to mistake the meaning of it, but perceives he understands it not. There is neither a multiplicity of simple ideas to be put together, which makes the doubtfulness in the names of mixed modes: nor a supposed, but an unknown real essence, with properties depending thereon, the precise number whereof are also unknown, which makes the difficulty in the names of substances. But on the contrary, in simple ideas the whole signification of the name is known at once, and consists not of parts, whereof more or less being put in, the idea may be varied, and so the signification of its name, be obscure, or uncertain.

§16. *Fifthly*, this further may be observed, concerning *simple ideas*, and their names, that they *have but few ascents in linea prædicamentali*, (as they call it,) *from the lowest species, to the summum genus.*[16] The reason whereof is, that the lowest species being but one simple idea, nothing can be left out of it, that so the difference being taken away, it may agree with some other thing in one idea common to them both; which having one name, is the genus of the other two: *v.g.* there is nothing can be left out of the idea of white and red, to make them agree in one common appearance, and so have one general name; as *rationality* being left out of the complex idea of *man*, makes it agree with brute, in the more general idea and name of *animal*. And therefore when to avoid unpleasant enumerations, men would comprehend both *white* and *red*, and several other such simple ideas, under one general name; they have been fain to do it by a word, which denotes only the way they get into the mind. For when *white*, *red*, and *yellow*, are all comprehended under the genus or name *colour*, it signifies no more, but such ideas, as are produced in the mind only by the sight, and have entrance only through the eyes. And when they would frame yet a more general term, to comprehend both *colours* and *sounds*, and the like simple ideas, they do it by a word, that signifies all such as come into the mind only by one sense: and so the general term *quality*, in its ordinary acception, comprehends colours, sounds, tastes, smells, and tangible qualities, with distinction from extension, number, motion, pleasure, and pain, which make impressions on the mind, and introduce their ideas by more senses than one.

Fifthly, simple ideas have few ascents in linea prædicamentali

§17. *Sixthly*, the names of simple ideas, substances, and mixed modes, have also this difference; that those *of mixed modes* stand for ideas perfectly *arbitrary*: those *of substances*, are not perfectly so; but *refer to a pattern, though with some latitude: and those of simple ideas are* perfectly taken from the existence of things, and are *not arbitrary at all*. Which what difference it makes in the significations of their names, we shall see in the following chapters.

Sixthly, names of simple ideas stand for ideas not at all arbitrary

The names of simple modes, differ little from those of simple ideas.

CHAPTER V

Of the Names of Mixed Modes and Relations

They stand for abstract ideas, as other general names

§1. The names of mixed modes being general, they stand, as has been shown, for sorts or species of things, each of which has its peculiar essence. The essences of these species also, as has been showed, are nothing but the abstract ideas in the mind, to which the name is annexed. Thus far the names and essences of mixed modes, have nothing but what is common to them, with other ideas: but if we take a little nearer survey of them, we shall find, that they have something peculiar, which, perhaps, may deserve our attention.

First, the ideas they stand for, are made by the understanding

§2. The first particularity I shall observe in them is, that the abstract ideas, or, if you please, the essences of the several species *of mixed modes are made by the understanding*, wherein they differ from those of simple ideas: in which sort, the mind has no power to make any one, but only receives such as are presented to it, by the real existence of things operating upon it.

Secondly, made arbitrarily, and without patterns

§3. In the next place, these *essences of the species of mixed modes, are* not only *made* by the mind, but made *very arbitrarily*, made without patterns, or reference to any real existence. Wherein they differ from those of substances, which carry with them the supposition of some real being, from which they are taken, and to which they are conformable. But in its complex ideas of mixed modes, the mind takes a liberty not to follow the existence of things exactly. It unites and retains certain collections, as so many distinct specific ideas, whilst others, that as often occur in nature, and are as plainly suggested by outward things, pass neglected without particular names or specifications. Nor does the mind, in these of mixed modes, as in the complex ideas of substances, examine them by the real existence of things; or verify them by patterns, containing such peculiar compositions in nature. To know whether his idea of *adultery*, or *incest*, be right, will a man seek it anywhere amongst things existing? Or is it true, because anyone has been witness to such an action? No: but it suffices here, that men have put together such a collection into one complex idea, that makes the archetype, and specific idea, whether ever any such action were committed *in rerum natura*,[1] or no.

§4. To understand this aright, we must consider *wherein this making of these complex ideas consists*; and that is not in the making any new idea, but putting together those which the mind had before. Wherein the mind does these three things: first, it chooses a certain number. Secondly, it gives them connexion, and makes them into one idea. Thirdly, it ties them together by a name. If we examine how the mind proceeds in these, and what liberty it takes in them, we shall easily observe, how these essences of the species of mixed modes, are the workmanship of the mind; and consequently, that the species themselves are of men's making. *How this is done*

§5. Nobody can doubt, but that these ideas of mixed modes, are made by a voluntary collection of ideas put together in the mind, independent from any original patterns in nature, who will but reflect, that this sort of complex ideas may be made, abstracted, and have names given them, and so a species be constituted, before any one individual of that species ever existed. Who can doubt, but the ideas of *sacrilege*, or *adultery*, might be framed in the mind of men, and have names given them; and so these species of mixed modes be constituted, before either of them was ever committed; and might be as well discoursed of, and reasoned about, and as certain truths discovered of them, whilst yet they had no being but in the understanding, as well as now, that they have but too frequently a real existence? Whereby it is plain, how much *the sorts of mixed modes are the creatures of the understanding*, where they have a being as subservient to all the ends of real truth and knowledge, as when they really exist: and we cannot doubt, but law-makers have often made laws about species of actions, which were only the creatures of their own understandings; beings that had no other existence, but in their own minds. And, I think, nobody can deny, but that the *resurrection* was a species of mixed modes in the mind, before it really existed. *Evidently arbitrary, in that the idea is often before the existence*

§6. To see *how arbitrarily these essences of mixed modes are made* by the mind, we need but take a view of almost any of them. A little looking into them, will satisfy us, that 'tis the mind, that combines several scattered independent ideas, into one complex one; and by the common name it gives them, makes them the essence of a certain species, without regulating itself by any connexion they have in nature. For what greater connexion in nature, has the idea of a man, than the idea of a sheep, with killing, that this is made a particular species of action, signified by the word *murder*, and the other not? Or what union is there in nature, between the idea of the relation of a father, with killing, than that of a son, *Instances murder, incest, stabbing*

or neighbour; that those are combined into one complex idea, and thereby made the essence of the distinct species *parricide*, whilst the other make no distinct species at all? But though they have made killing a man's father, or mother, a distinct species from killing his son, or daughter; yet in some other cases, son and daughter are taken in too, as well as father and mother; and they are all equally comprehended in the same species, as in that of *incest*. Thus the mind in mixed modes arbitrarily unites into complex ideas, such as it finds convenient; whilst others that have altogether as much union in nature, are left loose, and never combined into one idea, because they have no need of one name. 'Tis evident then, that the mind, by its free choice, gives a connexion to a certain number of ideas; which in nature have no more union with one another, than others that it leaves out: why else is the part of the weapon, the beginning of the wound is made with, taken notice of, to make the distinct species called *stabbing*, and the figure and matter of the weapon left out? I do not say, this is done without reason, as we shall see more by and by; but this I say, that it is done, by the free choice of the mind, pursuing its own ends; and that therefore these species of mixed modes, are the workmanship of the understanding: and there is nothing more evident, than that for the most part, in the framing these ideas, the mind searches not its patterns in nature, nor refers the ideas it makes to the real existence of things; but puts such together, as may best serve its own purposes, without tying itself to a precise imitation of anything that really exists.

But still subservient to the end of language

§7. But though these complex ideas, or *essences of mixed modes*, depend on the mind, and are made by it with great liberty; yet they *are not made at random*, and jumbled together without any reason at all. Though these complex ideas be not always copied from nature, yet they are always suited to the end for which abstract ideas are made: and though they be combinations made of ideas, that are loose enough, and have as little union in themselves, as several other, to which the mind never gives a connexion that combines them into one idea; yet they are always made for the convenience of communication, which is the chief end of language. The use of language is, by short sounds to signify with ease and dispatch general conceptions; wherein not only abundance of particulars may be contained, but also a great variety of independent ideas collected into one complex one. In the making therefore of the species of mixed modes, men have had regard only to such combinations, as they had occasion to mention one to another. Those they have combined into distinct

complex ideas, and given names to; whilst others that in nature have as near a union, are left loose and unregarded. For to go no further than human actions themselves, if they would make distinct abstract ideas, of all the varieties might be observed in them, the number must be infinite, and the memory confounded with the plenty, as well as overcharged to little purpose. It suffices, that men make and name so many complex ideas of these mixed modes, as they find they have occasion to have names for, in the ordinary occurrence of their affairs. If they join to the idea of killing, the idea of father, or mother, and so make a distinct species from killing a man's son, or neighbour, it is because of the different heinousness of the crime, and the distinct punishment is due to the murdering a man's father and mother different from what ought to be inflicted on the murder of a son or neighbour; and therefore they find it necessary to mention it by a distinct name, which is the end of making that distinct combination. But though the ideas of mother and daughter, are so differently treated, in reference to the idea of killing, that the one is joined with it, to make a distinct abstract idea with a name, and so a distinct species, and the other not; yet in respect of carnal knowledge, they are both taken in under *incest*; and that still for the same convenience of expressing under one name, and reckoning of one species, such unclean mixtures, as have a peculiar turpitude[2] beyond others; and this to avoid circumlocutions, and tedious descriptions.

Whereof the intranslatable words of divers languages are a proof

§8. A moderate skill *in different languages*, will easily satisfy one of the truth of this, it being so obvious to observe great store of *words in one* language, *which have not any that answer them in another.* Which plainly shows, that those of one country, by their customs and manner of life, have found occasion to make several complex ideas, and give names to them, which others never collected into specific ideas. This could not have happened, if these species were the steady workmanship of nature; and not collections made and abstracted by the mind, in order to naming, and for the convenience of communication. The terms of our law, which are not empty sounds, will hardly find words that answer them in the Spanish or Italian, no scanty languages; much less, I think, could anyone translate them into the Caribee,[3] or Westoe tongues: and the *versura*[4] of the Romans, or *corban*[5] of the Jews, have no words in other languages to answer them: the reason whereof is plain, from what has been said. Nay, if we will look a little more nearly into this matter, and exactly compare different languages, we shall find, that though they have words, which in translations and dictionaries, are supposed to answer one

another; yet there is scarce one of ten, amongst the names of complex ideas, especially of mixed modes, that stands for the same precise idea, which the word does that in dictionaries it is rendered by. There are no ideas more common, and less compounded, than the measures of time, extention, and weight, and the Latin names *hora*, *pes*, *libra*, are, without difficulty, rendered by the English names, *hour*, *foot*, and *pound*: But yet there is nothing more evident, than that the ideas a Roman annexed to these Latin names, were very far different from those which an Englishman expresses by those English ones. And if either of these should make use of the measures that those of the other language designed by their names, he would be quite out in his account. These are too sensible proofs to be doubted; and we shall find this much more so, in the names of more abstract and compounded ideas; such as are the greatest part of those which make up moral discourses: whose names, when men come curiously to compare, with those they are translated into, in other languages, they will find very few of them exactly to correspond in the whole extent of their significations.

This shows species to be made for communication

§9. The reason why I take so particular notice of this, is, that we may not be mistaken about *genera*, and *species*, and their *essences*, as if they were things regularly and constantly made by nature, and had a real existence in things; when they appear, upon a more wary survey, to be nothing else but an artifice of the understanding, for the easier signifying such collections of ideas, as it should often have occasion to communicate by one general term; under which divers particulars, as far forth as they agreed to that abstract idea, might be comprehended. And if the doubtful signification of the word *species*, may make it sound harsh to some, that I say, that the species of mixed modes are made by the understanding; yet, I think, it can by nobody be denied, that 'tis the mind makes those abstract complex ideas, to which specific names are given. And if it be true, as it is, that the mind makes the patterns, for sorting and naming of things, I leave it to be considered, who makes the boundaries of the sort, or *species*; since with me, *species* and *sort* have no other difference, than that of a Latin and English idiom.

In mixed modes 'tis the name that ties the combination together, and makes it a species

§10. *The near relation* that there is *between species, essences, and* their *general name*, at least in *mixed modes*, will further appear, when we consider, that it is the name that seems to preserve those essences, and give them their lasting duration. For the connexion between the loose parts of those complex ideas, being made by the mind, this union, which has no

particular foundation in nature, would cease again, were there not something that did, as it were, hold it together, and keep the parts from scattering. Though therefore it be the mind that makes the collection, 'tis the name which is, as it were, the knot, that ties them fast together. What a vast variety of different ideas, does the word *triumphus*[6] hold together, and deliver to us as one species! Had this name been never made, or quite lost, we might, no doubt, have had descriptions of what passed in that solemnity: but yet, I think, that which holds those different parts together, in the unity of one complex idea, is that very word annexed to it: without which, the several parts of that, would no more be thought to make one thing, than any other show, which having never been made but once, had never been united into one complex idea, under one denomination. How much therefore, in mixed modes, the unity necessary to any essence, depends on the mind; and how much the continuation and fixing of that unity, depends on the name in common use annexed to it, I leave to be considered by those, who look upon *essences* and *species*, as real established things in nature.

§11. Suitable to this, we find, that *men speaking of mixed modes, seldom* imagine or *take any other for species of them, but such as are set out by name*: because they being of man's making only, in order to naming, no such species are taken notice of, or supposed to be, unless a *name* be joined to it, as the sign of man's having combined into one idea several loose ones; and by that *name*, giving a lasting union to the parts, which would otherwise cease to have any, as soon as the mind laid by that abstract idea, and ceased actually to think on it. But when a name is once annexed to it, wherein the parts of that complex idea have a settled and permanent union; then is the *essence*, as it were established, and the species looked on as complete. For to what purpose should the memory charge itself with such compositions, unless it were by abstraction to make them general? And to what purpose make them general, unless it were, that they might have general *names*, for the convenience of discourse, and communication? Thus we see, that killing a man with a sword, or a hatchet, are looked on as no distinct species of action: but if the point of the sword first enter the body, it passes for a distinct species, where it has a distinct *name*, as in England, in whose language it is called *stabbing*: but in another country, where it has not happened to be specified under a peculiar *name*, it passes not for a distinct species. But in the species of corporeal substances, though it be the mind that makes the nominal essence: yet since those ideas, which are combined in it, are supposed to have an union in nature, whether the mind joins them or no,

therefore those are looked on as distinct species, without any operation of the mind, either abstracting, or giving a *name* to that complex idea.

For the originals of mixed modes, we look no further than the mind, which also shows them to be the workmanship of the understanding

§12. Conformable also to what has been said, concerning the essences of the species of *mixed modes*, that they are the creatures of the understanding, rather than the works of nature: conformable, I say, to this, we find, that *their names lead our thoughts to the mind, and no further.* When we speak of *justice*, or *gratitude*, we frame to ourselves no imagination of anything existing, which we would conceive; but our thoughts terminate in the abstract ideas of those virtues, and look not further; as they do, when we speak of a *horse*, or *iron*, whose specific ideas we consider not, as barely in the mind, but as in things themselves, which afford the original patterns of those ideas. But in mixed modes, at least the most considerable parts of them, which are moral beings, we consider the original patterns, as being in the mind; and to those we refer for the distinguishing of particular beings under names. And hence I think it is, that these essences of the species of mixed modes, are by a more particular name called *notions*; as by a peculiar right, appertaining to the understanding.

Their being made by the understanding without patterns, shows the reason why they are so compounded

§13. Hence likewise we may learn, *why the complex ideas of mixed modes, are commonly more compounded and decompounded, than those of natural substances.* Because they being the workmanship of the understanding, pursuing only its own ends, and the conveniency of expressing in short those ideas it would make known to another, does with great liberty unite often into one abstract idea things that in their nature have no coherence; and so under one term, bundle together a great variety of compounded, and decompounded ideas. Thus the name of *procession*, what a great mixture of independent ideas of persons, habits, tapers,[7] orders, motions, sounds, does it contain in that complex one, which the mind of man has arbitrarily put together, to express by that one name? Whereas the complex ideas of the sorts of substances, are usually made up of only a small number of simple ones; and in the species of animals, these two, *viz.* shape and voice, commonly make the whole nominal essence.

Names of mixed modes stand always for their real essences

§14. Another thing we may observe from what has been said, is, That *the names of mixed modes always signify* (when they have any determined signification) *the real essences of their species.* For these abstract ideas, being the workmanship of the mind, and not referred to the real existence of things, there is no supposition of anything

more signified by that name, but barely that complex idea, the mind itself has formed, which is all it would have expressed by it; and is that, on which all the properties of the species depend and from which alone they all flow: and so in these the *real* and *nominal essence* is the same; which of what concernment it is to the certain knowledge of general truth, we shall see hereafter.

Why their names are usually got before their ideas

§15. This also may show us the reason, *why for the most part the names of mixed modes are got, before the ideas they stand for are perfectly known*. Because there being no species of these ordinarily taken notice of, but what have names; and those species, or rather their essences, being abstract complex ideas made arbitrarily by the mind, it is convenient, if not necessary, to know the names, before one endeavour to frame these complex ideas: unless a man will fill his head with a company of abstract complex ideas, which others having no names for, he has nothing to do with, but to lay by, and forget again. I confess, that in the beginning of languages, it was necessary to have the idea, before one gave it the name: and so it is still, where making a new complex idea, one also, by giving it a new name, makes a new word. But this concerns not languages made, which have generally pretty well provided for ideas, which men have frequent occasion to have, and communicate: and in such, I ask, whether it be not the ordinary method, that children learn the names of mixed modes, before they have their ideas? What one of a thousand ever frames the abstract idea of *glory* or *ambition* before he has heard the names of them. In simple ideas and substances, I grant it is otherwise; which being such ideas, as have a real existence and union in nature, the ideas, or names, are got one before the other, as it happens.

Reason of my being so large on this subject

§16. What has been said here of mixed modes, is with very little difference applicable also to relations; which since every man himself may observe, I may spare myself the pains to enlarge on: Especially, since what I have here said concerning words in this third book, will possibly be thought by some to be much more than what so slight a subject required. I allow, it might be brought into a narrower compass:[8] but I was willing to stay my reader on an argument, that appears to me new, and a little out of the way, (I am sure 'tis one, I thought not of, when I began to write,) that by searching it to the bottom, and turning it on every side, some part or other might meet with everyone's thoughts, and give occasion to the most averse, or negligent, to reflect on a general miscarriage; which, though of great consequence, is little taken notice of.

When it is considered, what a pudder[9] is made about *essences*, and how much all sorts of knowledge, discourse, and conversation, are pestered and disordered by the careless, and confused use and application of words, it will, perhaps, be thought worthwhile throughly[10] to lay it open. And I shall be pardoned, if I have dwelt long on an argument, which I think therefore needs to be inculcated; because the faults, men are usually guilty of in this kind, are not only the greatest hindrances of true knowledge; but are so well thought of, as to pass for it. Men would often see what a small pittance of reason and truth, or possibly none at all, is mixed with those huffing[11] opinions they are swelled with; if they would look beyond fashionable sounds, and observe what ideas are, or are not comprehended under those words, with which they are so armed at all points, and with which they so confidently lay about them. I shall imagine I have done some service to truth, peace, and learning, if, by any enlargement on this subject, I can make men reflect on their own use of language; and give them reason to suspect, that since it is frequent for others, it may also be possible for them, to have sometimes very good and approved words in their mouths, and writings, with very uncertain, little, or no signification. And therefore it is not unreasonable for them to be wary herein themselves, and not to be unwilling to have them examined by others. With this design therefore, I shall go on with what I have further to say, concerning this matter.

CHAPTER VI

Of the Names of Substances

The common names of substances stand for sorts

§1. *The common names of substances*, as well as other general terms, *stand for sorts*: which is nothing else but the being made signs of such complex ideas, wherein several particular substances do, or might agree, by virtue of which, they are capable of being comprehended in one common conception, and be signified by one name. I say, do or might agree: for though there be but one Sun existing in the world, yet the idea of it being abstracted, so that more substances (if there were several) might each agree in it; it is as much a sort, as if there were as many Suns as there are stars. They want not their reasons, who think there are,

and that each fixed star, would answer the idea the name *Sun* stands for, to one who were placed in a due distance; which, by the way, may show us how much the sorts, or, if you please, *genera* and *species* of things (for those Latin terms signify to me, no more than the English word *sort*) depend on such collections of ideas, as men have made; and not on the real nature of things: since 'tis not impossible, but that in propriety of speech, that might be a Sun to one, which is a star to another.

The essence of each sort is the abstract idea

§2. The measure and boundary of each sort, or species, whereby it is constituted that particular sort, and distinguished from others, is that we call its *essence*, which *is* nothing but that *abstract idea to which the name is annexed*: so that everything contained in that idea, is essential to that sort. This, though it be all the essence of natural substances, that we know, or by which we distinguish them into sorts yet I call it by a peculiar name, the *nominal essence*, to distinguish it from that real constitution of substances, upon which depends this *nominal essence*, and all the properties of that sort; which therefore, as has been said, may be called the *real essence*: *v.g.* the *nominal essence* of *gold*, is that complex idea the word *gold* stands for, let it be, for instance, a body yellow, of a certain weight, malleable, fusible, and fixed. But the *real essence* is the constitution of the insensible parts of that body, on which those qualities, and all the other properties of *gold* depend. How far these two are different, though they are both called *essence*, is obvious, at first sight, to discover.

The nominal and real essence different

§3. For though, perhaps, voluntary motion, with sense and reason, joined to a body of a certain shape, be the complex idea, to which I, and others, annex the name *man*; and so be the *nominal essence* of the species so called: yet nobody will say, that that complex idea is the *real essence* and source of all those operations, which are to be found in any individual of that sort. The foundation of all those qualities, which are the ingredients of our complex idea, is something quite different: and had we such a knowledge of that constitution of *man*, from which his faculties of moving, sensation, and reasoning, and other powers flow; and on which his so regular shape depends, as 'tis possible angels have, and 'tis certain his Maker has, we should have a quite other idea of his essence, than what now is contained in our definition of that species, be it what it will: and our idea of any individual *man* would be as far different from what it now is, as is his, who knows all the springs and wheels, and other contrivances within, of the famous clock at Strasbourg,[1] from that which a gazing countryman has of it, who barely sees the motion of the

hand, and hears the clock strike, and observes only some of the outward appearances.

Nothing essential to individuals

§4. That *essence*, in the ordinary use of the word, relates to *sorts*, and that it is considered in particular beings, no further than as they are ranked into *sorts*, appears from hence: that take but away the abstract ideas, by which we sort individuals, and rank them under common names, and then the thought of anything *essential* to any of them, instantly vanishes: we have no notion of the one, without the other: which plainly shows their relation. 'Tis necessary for me to be as I am; GOD and nature has made me so: but there is nothing I have, is essential to me. An accident, or disease, may very much alter my colour, or shape; a fever, or fall, may take away my reason, or memory, or both; and an apoplexy leave neither sense, nor understanding, no nor life. Other creatures of my shape, may be made with more, and better, or fewer, and worse faculties than I have: and others may have reason and sense in a shape and body very different from mine. None of these are essential to the one, or the other, or to any individual whatsoever, till the mind refers it to some sort or species of things; and then presently, according to the abstract idea of that sort, something is found *essential*. Let anyone examine his own thoughts, and he will find, that as soon as he supposes or speaks of *essential*, the consideration of some species, or the complex idea, signified by some general name, comes into his mind: and 'tis in reference to that, that this or that quality is said to be *essential*. So that if it be asked, whether it be *essential* to me, or any other particular corporeal being to have reason? I say no; no more than it is *essential* to this white thing I write on, to have words in it. But if that particular being be to be counted of the sort *man*, and to have the name *man* given it, then reason is *essential* to it, supposing reason to be a part of the complex idea the name *man* stands for: as it is *essential* to this thing I write on to contain words, if I will give it the name *treatise*, and rank it under that species. So that *essential, and not essential, relate only to our abstract ideas, and the names annexed to them*; which amounts to no more but this, that whatever particular thing, has not in it those qualities, which are contained in the abstract idea, which any general term stands for, cannot be ranked under that species, nor be called by that name, since that abstract idea is the very essence of that species.

§5. Thus if the idea of *body*, with some people, be bare extension or space, then solidity is not essential to body: if others make the idea, to which they give the name *body*, to be solidity and extension, then solidity is essential

to *body*. That therefore, and *that alone is* considered as *essential, which makes a part of the complex idea the name of a sort stands for*, without which, no particular thing can be reckoned of that sort, nor be entitled to that name. Should there be found a parcel of matter, that had all the other qualities that are in *iron*, but wanted obedience to the loadstone;[2] and would neither be drawn by it, nor receive direction from it, Would anyone question, whether it wanted anything essential? It would be absurd to ask, whether a thing really existing, wanted anything essential to it. Or could it be demanded, whether this made an essential or specific difference, or no; since we have no other measure of essential or specific, but our abstract ideas? And to talk of specific differences in nature, without reference to general ideas and names, is to talk unintelligibly. For I would ask anyone, what is sufficient to make an *essential* difference in nature, between any two particular beings, without any regard had to some abstract idea, which is looked upon as the essence and standard of a *species*? All such patterns and standards, being quite laid aside, particular beings, considered barely in themselves, will be found to have all their qualities equally essential; and everything, in each individual, will be essential to it, or, which is more, nothing at all. For though it may be reasonable to ask, whether obeying the magnet, be essential to *iron*? yet, I think, it is very improper and insignificant to ask, whether it be essential to the particular parcel of matter I cut my pen with,[3] without considering it under the name *iron*, or as being of a certain *species*? And if, as has been said, our abstract ideas, which have names annexed to them, are the boundaries of *species*, nothing can be *essential* but what is contained in those ideas.

§6. 'Tis true, I have often mentioned a *real essence*, distinct in substances, from those abstract ideas of them, which I call their *nominal essence*. By this *real essence*, I mean, that real constitution of anything, which is the foundation of all those properties, that are combined in, and are constantly found to co-exist with the *nominal essence*; that particular constitution, which everything has within itself, without any relation to anything without it. But *essence*, even in this sense, *relates to a sort*, and supposes a species: for being that real constitution, on which the properties depend, it necessarily supposes a sort of things, properties belonging only to species, and not to individuals; *v.g.* supposing the nominal essence of *gold*, to be body of such a peculiar colour and weight, with malleability and fusibility, the real essence is that constitution of the parts of matter, on which these qualities, and their union, depend; and is also the foundation of its solubility in *aqua regia*,[4] and other

properties accompanying that complex idea. Here are *essences* and *properties*, but all upon supposition of a sort, or general abstract idea, which is considered as immutable: but there is no individual parcel of matter, to which any of these qualities are so annexed, as to be essential to it, or inseparable from it. That which is *essential*, belongs to it as a condition, whereby it is of this or that sort: but take away the consideration of its being ranked under the name of some abstract idea, and then there is nothing necessary to it, nothing inseparable from it. Indeed, as to the *real essences* of substances, we only suppose their being, without precisely knowing what they are: but that which annexes them still to the species, is the nominal essence, of which they are the supposed foundation and cause.

The nominal essence bounds the species

§7. The next thing to be considered is, by which of those essences it is, that *substances are determined into* sorts, or *species*; and that 'tis evident, is *by the nominal essence*. For 'tis that alone, that the name, which is the mark of the sort, signifies. 'Tis impossible therefore, that anything should determine the sorts of things, which we rank under general names, but that idea, which that name is designed as a mark for; which is that, as has been shown, which we call the *nominal essence*. Why do we say, this is a *horse*, and that a *mule*; this is an *animal*, that an *herb*? How comes any particular thing to be of this or that sort, but because it has that nominal essence, or, which is all one, agrees to that abstract idea, that name is annexed to? And I desire anyone but to reflect on his own thoughts, when he hears or speaks any of those, or other names of substances, to know what sort of essences they stand for.

§8. And that the *species of things to us, are nothing but the ranking them under distinct names, according to the complex ideas in us*; and not according to precise, distinct, real essences in them, is plain from hence, that we find many of the individuals that are ranked into one sort, called by one common name, and so received as being of one species, have yet qualities depending on their real constitutions, as far different one from another, as from others, from which they are accounted to differ *specifically*. This, as it is easy to be observed by all, who have to do with natural bodies; so chemists especially are often, by sad experience, convinced of it, when they, sometimes in vain, seek for the same qualities in one parcel of sulphur, antimony,[5] or vitriol, which they have found in others. For though they are bodies of the same species, having the same nominal essence, under the same name; yet do they often, upon severe ways of examination, betray qualities so different one from another, as to frustrate the expectation and labour of very wary

chemists. But if things were distinguished into species, according to their real essences, it would be as impossible to find different properties in any two individual substances of the same species, as it is to find different properties in two circles, or two equilateral triangles. That is properly the *essence* to us, which determines every particular to this or that *classis*;[6] or, which is the same thing, to this or that general name: and what can that be else, but that abstract idea, to which that name is annexed? and so has, in truth, a reference, not so much to the being of particular things, as to their general denominations.

Not the real essence which we know not

§9. Nor indeed *can we* rank, and *sort things*, and consequently (which is the end of sorting) denominate them *by their real essences*, because we know them not. Our faculties carry us no further towards the knowledge and distinction of substances, than a collection of those sensible ideas, which we observe in them; which however made with the greatest diligence and exactness, we are capable of, yet is more remote from the true internal constitution, from which those qualities flow, than, as I said, a countryman's idea is from the inward contrivance of that famous clock at Strasbourg,[7] whereof he only sees the outward figure and motions. There is not so contemptible a plant or animal, that does not confound the most enlarged understanding. Though the familiar use of things about us, take off our wonder; yet it cures not our ignorance. When we come to examine the stones, we tread on; or the iron, we daily handle, we presently find, we know not their make; and can give no reason, of the different qualities we find in them. 'Tis evident the internal constitution, whereon their properties depend, is unknown to us. For to go no further than the grossest and most obvious we can imagine amongst them, what is that texture of parts, that real essence, that makes lead and antimony fusible; wood and stones not? What makes lead, and iron malleable; antimony and stones not? And yet how infinitely these come short, of the fine contrivances, and unconceivable *real essences* of plants or animals, everyone knows. The workmanship of the all-wise, and powerful God, in the great fabric of the universe, and every part thereof, further exceeds the capacity and comprehension of the most inquisitive and intelligent man, than the best contrivance of the most ingenious man, doth the conceptions of the most ignorant of rational creatures. Therefore we in vain pretend to range things into sorts, and dispose them into certain classes, under names, by their *real essences*, that are so far from our discovery or comprehension. A blind man may as soon sort things by their colours, and he that has lost his smell, as

well distinguish a lily and a rose by their odours, as by those internal constitutions which he knows not. He that thinks he can distinguish sheep and goats by their real essences, that are unknown to him, may be pleased to try his skill in those species, called *cassowary*, and *querechinchio*;[8] and by their internal real essences, determine the boundaries of those species, without knowing the complex idea of sensible qualities, that each of those names stand for, in the countries where those animals are to be found.

Not substantial forms which we know less

§10. Those therefore who have been taught, that the several species of substances had their distinct internal *substantial forms*; and that it was those *forms*, which made the distinction of substances into their true *species and genera*, were led yet further out of the way, by having their minds set upon fruitless inquiries after *substantial forms*, wholly unintelligible, and whereof we have scarce so much as any obscure, or confused conception in general.

That the nominal essence is that whereby we distinguish species, further evident from spirits

§11. That our *ranking*, and distinguishing natural *substances into species consists in the nominal essences*, the mind makes, and not in the real essences to be found in the things themselves, is further evident from our ideas of spirits. For the mind getting, only by reflecting on its own operations, those simple ideas which it attributes to spirits, it hath, or can have no other notion of spirit, but by attributing all those operations, it finds in itself, to a sort of beings, without consideration of matter. And even the most advanced notion we have of God, is but attributing the same simple ideas which we have got from reflection on what we find in ourselves, and which we conceive to have more perfection in them, than would be in their absence, attributing, I say, those simple ideas to him in an unlimited degree. Thus having got from reflecting on ourselves, the idea of existence, knowledge, power, and pleasure, each of which we find it better to have than to want; and the more we have of each, the better; joining all these together, with infinity to each of them, we have the complex idea of an eternal, omniscient, omnipotent, infinitely wise, and happy being. And though we are told, that there are different *species of angels*;[9] yet we know not how to frame distinct specific ideas of them; not out of any conceit, that the existence of more species than one of spirits, is impossible; but because having no more simple ideas (nor being able to frame more) applicable to such beings, but only those few, taken from ourselves, and from the actions of our own minds in thinking, and being delighted, and moving several parts of our bodies; we can no otherwise distinguish in our

conceptions the several *species of spirits*, one from another, but by attributing those operations and powers, we find in ourselves, to them in a higher or lower degree; and so have no very distinct specific ideas of spirits, except only of GOD, to whom we attribute both duration, and all those other ideas with infinity; to the other spirits, with limitation: nor as I humbly conceive do we, between GOD and them in our ideas, put any difference by any number of simple ideas, which we have of one, and not of the other, but only that of infinity. All the particular ideas of existence, knowledge, will, power, and motion, *etc.* being ideas derived from the operations of our minds, we attribute all of them to all sorts of spirits, with the difference only of degrees, to the utmost we can imagine, even infinity, when we would frame, as well as we can, an idea of the first being; who yet, 'tis certain, is infinitely more remote in the real excellency of his nature, from the highest and perfectest of all created beings, than the greatest man, nay, purest seraphim,[10] is from the most contemptible part of matter; and consequently must infinitely exceed what our narrow understandings can conceive of him.

Whereof there are probably numberless species

§12. It is not impossible to conceive, nor repugnant to reason, that there may be many *species of spirits*, as much separated and diversified one from another, by distinct properties, whereof we have no ideas, as the species of sensible things are distinguished one from another, by qualities, which we know, and observe in them. That there should be more species of intelligent creatures above us, than there are of sensible and material below us, is probable to me from hence; that in all the visible corporeal world, we see no chasms, or gaps. All quite down from us, the descent is by easy steps, and a continued series of things, that in each remove, differ very little one from the other. There are fishes that have wings, and are not strangers to the airy region: and there are some birds, that are inhabitants of the water; whose blood is cold as fishes, and their flesh so like in taste, that the scrupulous are allowed them on fish-days.[11] There are animals so near of kin both to birds and beasts, that they are in the middle between both: amphibious animals link the terrestrial and aquatic together; seals live at land and at sea, and porpoises have the warm blood and entrails of a hog, not to mention what is confidently reported of mermaids, or sea-men.[12] There are some brutes, that seem to have as much knowledge and reason, as some that are called men: and the animal and vegetable kingdoms, are so nearly joined, that if you will take the lowest of one, and the highest of the other, there will scarce be perceived any

great difference between them; and so on till we come to the lowest and the most inorganical parts of matter, we shall find everywhere, that the several species are linked together, and differ but in almost insensible degrees. And when we consider the infinite power and wisdom of the Maker, we have reason to think, that it is suitable to the magnificent harmony of the universe, and the great design and infinite goodness of the architect, that the species of creatures should also, by gentle degrees, ascend upward from us toward his infinite perfection, as we see they gradually descend from us downwards: which if it be probable, we have reason then to be persuaded, that there are far more species of creatures above us, than there are beneath; we being in degrees of perfection, much more remote from the infinite being of GOD, than we are from the lowest state of being, and that which approaches nearest to nothing. And yet of all those distinct species, for the reasons above-said, we have no clear distinct ideas.

The nominal essence that of the species, proved from water and ice

§13. But to return to the species of corporeal substances. If I should ask anyone, whether *ice* and *water* were two distinct species of things, I doubt not but I should be answered in the affirmative: and it cannot be denied, but he that says they are two distinct species, is in the right. But if an Englishman, bred in Jamaica, who, perhaps, had never seen nor heard of *ice*, coming into England in the winter, find, the water he put in his basin at night, in a great part frozen in the morning; and not knowing any peculiar name it had, should call it hardened water; I ask, whether this would be a new species to him, different from water? And, I think, it would be answered here, it would not to him be a new species, no more than congealed jelly, when it is cold, is a distinct species, from the same jelly fluid and warm; or than liquid gold, in the furnace, is a distinct species from hard gold in the hands of a workman. And if this be so, 'tis plain, that our *distinct species, are nothing but distinct complex ideas, with distinct names annexed to them.* 'Tis true, every substance that exists, has its peculiar constitution, whereon depend those sensible qualities, and powers, we observe in it: but the ranking of things into species, which is nothing but sorting them under several titles, is done by us, according to the ideas that we have of them: which though sufficient to distinguish them by names; so that we may be able to discourse of them, when we have them not present before us: yet if we suppose it to be done by their real internal constitutions, and that things existing are distinguished by nature into species, by real essences, according as we distinguish them into species by names, we shall be liable to great mistakes.

Difficulties against a certain number of real essences

§14. To distinguish substantial beings into species, according to the usual supposition, that there are certain precise *essences* or *forms* of things, whereby all the individuals existing, are, by nature distinguished into species, these things are necessary:

§15. *First*, to be assured, that nature, in the production of things, always designs them to partake of certain regulated established *essences*, which are to be the models of all things to be produced. This, in that crude sense, it is usually proposed, would need some better explication, before it can fully be assented to.

§16. *Secondly*, it would be necessary to know, whether nature always attains that *essence*, it designs in the production of things. The irregular and monstrous births, that in divers sorts of animals have been observed, will always give us reason to doubt of one, or both of these.

§17. *Thirdly*, it ought to be determined, whether those we call *monsters*, be really a distinct species, according to the scholastic notion of the word *species*; since it is certain, that everything that exists, has its particular constitution: and yet we find, that some of these monstrous productions, have few or none of those qualities, which are supposed to result from, and accompany the *essence* of that species, from whence they derive their originals, and to which, by their descent, they seem to belong.

§18. *Fourthly*, the *real essences* of those things, which we distinguish into species, and as so distinguished we name, ought to be known; *i.e.* we ought to have ideas of them. But since we are ignorant in these four points, *the supposed real essences of things, stand us not instead for the distinguishing substances into species.*

Our nominal essences of substances, not perfect collections of properties

§19. *Fifthly*, the only imaginable help in this case would be, that having framed perfect complex ideas of the *properties* of things, flowing from their different real essences, we should thereby distinguish them into species. But neither can this be done: for being ignorant of the real essence itself, it is impossible to know all those properties, that flow from it, and are so annexed to it, that any one of them being away, we may certainly conclude, that the essence is not there, and so the thing is not of that species. We can never know what are the precise number of properties depending on the real essence of *gold*, any one of which failing, the real essence of gold, and consequently gold, would not be there, unless we knew the real essence of d itself, and by that determined that species. By the word *gold* here, I must be understood to design a particular piece of matter; *v.g.* the last guinea[13] that

was coined. For if it should stand here in its ordinary signification for that complex idea, which I, or anyone else calls gold; *i.e.* for the nominal essence of gold, it would be *jargon*: so hard is it, to show the various meaning and imperfection of words, when we have nothing else but words to do it by. §20. By all which it is clear, that our *distinguishing substances into species* by names, *is not* at all *founded on their real essences*; nor can we pretend to range, and determine them exactly into species, according to internal essential differences.

But such a collection as our names stand for

§21. But since, as has been remarked, we have need of general words, though we know not the real essences of things; all we can do, is to collect such a number of simple ideas, as by examination, we find to be united together in things existing, and thereof to make one complex idea. Which though it be not the real essence of any substance that exists, is yet *the specific essence*, to which our name belongs, and is convertible with it; by which we may at least try the truth of these nominal essences. For example, there be that say, that the essence of *body* is extension: if it be so, we can never mistake in putting the essence of anything for the thing itself. Let us then in discourse, put *extension* for *body*; and when we would say, that body moves, let us say, that extension moves, and see how it will look. He that should say, that one extension, by impulse moves another extension, would, by the bare expression, sufficiently show the absurdity of such a notion. The *essence* of anything, in respect of us, is the whole complex idea, comprehended and marked by that name; and in substances, besides the several distinct simple ideas that make them up, the confused one of substance, or of an unknown support and cause of their union, is always a part: and therefore the essence of body is not bare extension, but an extended solid thing; and so to say, an extended solid thing moves, or impels another, is all one, and as intelligible, as to say, *body* moves, or impels. Likewise, to say, that a rational animal is capable of conversation, is all one, as to say, a *man*. But no one will say, that rationality is capable of conversation, because it makes not the whole essence, to which we give the name man.

Our abstract ideas are to us the measures of species, instance in that of man

§22. There are creatures in the world, that have shapes like ours, but are hairy, and want language, and reason. There are naturals[14] amongst us, that have perfectly our shape, but want reason, and some of them language too. There are creatures, as 'tis said, (*sit fides penes authorem*,[15] but there appears no contradiction, that there should be such) that with language, and reason,

and a shape in other things agreeing with ours, have hairy tails; others where the males have no beards, and others where the females have. If it be asked, whether these be all *men*, or no, all of human species; 'tis plain, the question refers only to the nominal essence: for those of them to whom the definition of the word *man*, or the complex idea signified by name, agrees, are *men*, and the other not. But if the inquiry be made concerning the supposed real essence; and whether the internal constitution and frame of these several creatures be specifically different, it is wholly impossible for us to answer, no part of that going into our specific idea: only we have reason to think, that where the faculties, or outward frame so much differs, the internal constitution is not exactly the same: but, what difference in the internal real constitution makes a specific difference, it is in vain to inquire; whilst *our measures of species* be, as they *are*, *only our abstract ideas*, which we know; and not that internal constitution, which makes no part of them. Shall the difference of hair only on the skin, be a mark of a different internal specific constitution between a changeling[16] and a drill,[17] when they agree in shape, and want of reason and speech? And shall not the want of reason and speech, be a sign to us of different real constitutions and species between a changeling, and a reasonable man? And so of the rest, if we pretend, that the distinction of species or sorts is fixedly established by the real frame, and secret constitutions of things.

Species not distinguished by generation

§23. Nor let anyone say, that the power of propagation in animals by the mixture of male and female, and in plants by seeds, keeps the supposed real species distinct and entire. For granting this to be true, it would help us in the distinction of the species of things no further than the tribes of animals and vegetables. What must we do for the rest? But in those too it is not sufficient: for if history lie not, women have conceived by drills; and what real species, by that measure, such a production will be in nature, will be a new question; and we have reason to think this not impossible, since mules and jumarts,[18] the one from the mixture of an ass and a mare, the other from the mixture of a bull and a mare, are so frequent in the world. I once saw a creature, that was the issue of a cat and a rat, and had the plain marks of both about it; wherein nature appeared to have followed the pattern of neither sort alone, but to have jumbled them both together. To which, he that shall add the monstrous productions, that are so frequently to be met with in nature, will find it hard, even in the race of animals, to determine by the pedigree of what species every animal's issue is; and be at a loss about the real essence, which

he thinks certainly conveyed by generation, and has alone a right to the specific name. But further, if the species of animals and plants are to be distinguished only by propagation, must I go to the Indies[19] to see the sire and dam of the one, and the plant from which the seed was gathered, that produced the other, to know whether this be a tiger or that tea?

Not by substantial forms

§24. Upon the whole matter, 'tis evident, that 'tis their own collections of sensible qualities, that men make the essences of their several sorts of substances; and that their real internal structures, are not considered by the greatest part of men, in the sorting them. Much less were any *substantial forms*[20] ever thought on by any, but those who have in this one part of the world, learned the language of the Schools: and yet those ignorant men, who pretend not any insight into the real essences, nor trouble themselves about substantial forms, but are content with knowing things one from another, by their sensible qualities, are often better acquainted with their differences; can more nicely distinguish them from their uses; and better know what they may expect from each, than those learned quick-sighted men, who look so deep into them, and talk so confidently of something more hidden and essential.

The specific essences are made by the mind

§25. But supposing that the *real essences* of substances were discoverable, by those, that would severely apply themselves to that inquiry; yet we could not reasonably think, that the *ranking of things under general names, was regulated by* those internal real constitutions, or anything else but *their obvious appearances*. Since languages, in all countries, have been established long before sciences. So that they have not been philosophers, or logicians, or such who have troubled themselves about *forms* and *essences*, that have made the general names, that are in use amongst the several nations of men: but those, more or less comprehensive terms, have, for the most part, in all languages, received their birth and signification, from ignorant and illiterate people, who sorted and denominated things, by those sensible qualities they found in them, thereby to signify them, when absent, to others, whether they had an occasion to mention a sort, or a particular thing.

Therefore very various and uncertain

§26. Since then it is evident, that we sort and name substances by their *nominal*, and not by their real *essences*, the next thing to be considered is, how, and by whom these *essences* come to be made. As to the latter, 'tis evident they *are made by the mind*, and not by nature: for were they nature's workmanship, they could not be so various and different in several men, as experience tells us they are. For if we will

examine it, we shall not find the nominal essence of any one species of substances, in all men the same; no not of that, which of all others we are the most intimately acquainted with. It could not possibly be, that the abstract idea, to which the name *man* is given, should be different in several men, if it were of nature's making; and that to one it should be *animal rationale*, and to another *animal implume bipes latis unguibus*.[21] He that annexes the name *man*, to a complex idea, made up of sense and spontaneous motion, joined to a body of such a shape, has thereby one essence of the species *man*: and he that, upon further examination, adds rationality, has another essence of the species he calls *man*: by which means, the same individual will be a true *man* to the one, which is not so to the other. I think, there is scarce anyone will allow this upright figure, so well known, to be the essential difference of the species *man*; and yet how far men determine of the sorts of animals, rather by their shape, than descent, is very visible; since it has been more than once debated, whether several human fœtus should be preserved, or received to baptism, or no, only because of the difference of their outward configuration, from the ordinary make of children, without knowing whether they were not as capable of reason, as infants cast in another mould: some whereof, though of an approved shape, are never capable of as much appearance of reason, all their lives, as is to be found in an ape, or an elephant; and never give any signs of being acted by a rational soul. Whereby it is evident, that the outward figure, which only was found wanting, and not the faculty of reason, which nobody could know would be wanting in its due season, was made essential to the human species. The learned divine and lawyer, must, on such occasions, renounce his sacred definition of *animal rationale*, and substitute some other essence of the human species. Monsieur Menage[22] furnishes us with an example worth the taking notice of on this occasion. 'When the Abbot of St Martin', says he, 'was born, he had so little of the figure of a man, that it bespake him rather a monster. 'Twas for some time under deliberation, whether he should be baptized or no. However, he was baptized and declared a man provisionally [till time should show what he would prove]. Nature had moulded him so untowardly, that he was called all his life the Abbot Malotru [i.e. ill-shaped]. He was of Caen' (Menagiana $\frac{278}{430}$). This child we see was very near being excluded out of the species of *man*, barely by his shape. He escaped very narrowly as he was, and 'tis certain a figure a little more oddly turned had cast him, and he had been executed as a thing not to be allowed to pass for a man. And yet there can be no reason given, why if the

lineaments of his face had been a little altered, a rational soul could not have been lodged in him; why a visage somewhat longer, or a nose flatter, or a wider mouth could not have consisted, as well as the rest of his ill figure, with such a soul, such parts, as made him, disfigured as he was, capable to be a dignitary in the Church.

§27. Wherein then, would I gladly know, consists the precise and *unmovable boundaries of* that *species*? 'Tis plain, if we examine, there is *no* such thing *made by nature*, and established by her amongst men. The real essence of that, or any other sort of substances, 'tis evident we know not; and therefore are so undetermined in our nominal essences, which we make ourselves, that if several men were to be asked, concerning some oddly-shaped fœtus, as soon as born, whether it were a *man*, or no, 'tis past doubt, one should meet with different answers. Which could not happen, if the nominal essences, whereby we limit and distinguish the species of substances, were not made by man, with some liberty; but were exactly copied from precise boundaries set by nature, whereby it distinguished all substances into certain species. Who would undertake to resolve, what species that monster was of, which is mentioned by Licetus,[23] *lib.* 1. *c.* 3. with a man's head and hog's body? Or those other, which to the bodies of men, had the heads of beasts, as dogs, horses, *etc.* If any of these creatures had lived, and could have spoke, it would have increased the difficulty. Had the upper part, to the middle, been of human shape, and all below swine; had it been murder to destroy it? Or must the Bishop have been consulted, whether it were man enough to be admitted to the font, or no? As I have been told, it happened in France some years since, in somewhat a like case. So uncertain are the boundaries of species of animals to us, who have no other measures, than the complex ideas of our own collecting: and so far are we from certainly knowing what a *man* is; though, perhaps, it will be judged great ignorance to make any doubt about it. And yet, I think, I may say, that the certain boundaries of that species, are so far from being determined, and the precise number of simple ideas, which make the nominal essence, so far from being settled, and perfectly known, that very material doubts may still arise about it: and I imagine, none of the definitions of the word *man*, which we yet have, nor descriptions of that sort of animal, are so perfect and exact, as to satisfy a considerate inquisitive person; much less to obtain a general consent, and to be that which men would everywhere stick by, in the decision of cases, and determining of life and death, baptism or no baptism, in productions that might happen.

But not so arbitrary as mixed modes

§28. But though these *nominal essences of substances* are made by the mind, they are *not* yet *made so arbitrarily, as those of mixed modes*. To the making of any nominal essence, it is necessary, *first*, that the ideas whereof it consists, have such an union as to make but one idea, how compounded soever. *Secondly*, that the particular ideas so united, be exactly the same, neither more nor less. For if two abstract complex ideas, differ either in number or sorts, of their component parts, they make two different, and not one and the same essence. In the first of these, the mind, in making its complex ideas of substances, only follows nature; and puts none together, which are not supposed to have an union in nature. Nobody joins the voice of a sheep, with the shape of a horse; nor the colour of lead, with the weight and fixedness of gold, to be the complex ideas of any real substances; unless he has a mind to fill his head with chimeras,[24] and his discourse with unintelligible words. Men, observing certain qualities always joined and existing together, therein copied nature; and of ideas so united, made their complex ones of substances. For though men may make what complex ideas they please, and give what names to them they will; yet if they will be understood, when they speak of things really existing, they must, in some degree, conform their ideas to the things they would speak of: or else men's language will be like that of Babel; and every man's words, being intelligible only to himself, would no longer serve to conversation, and the ordinary affairs of life, if the ideas they stand for, be not some way answering the common appearances and agreement of substances, as they really exist.

Though very imperfect

§29. *Secondly*, though the mind of man, *in making* its *complex ideas of substances*, never puts any together that do not really, or are not supposed to co-exist; and so it truly borrows that union from nature: yet *the number* it combines, *depends upon the various care, industry, or fancy of him that makes it.* Men generally content themselves with some few sensible obvious qualities; and often, if not always, leave out others as material, and as firmly united, as those that they take. Of sensible substances there are two sorts; one of organized bodies, which are propagated by seed; and in these, the shape is that, which to us is the leading quality, and most characteristical part, that determines the species: and therefore in vegetables and animals, an extended solid substance of such a certain figure usually serves the turn. For however some men seem to prize their definition of *animal rationale*,[25] yet should there a creature be found, that had language and reason, but partaked not of the usual shape of a man, I believe it would hardly pass for

a *man*, how much soever it were *animal rationale*. And if Baalam's ass[26] had, all his life, discoursed as rationally as he did once with his master, I doubt yet, whether anyone would have thought him worthy the name *man*, or allowed him to be of the same species with himself. As in vegetables and animals 'tis the shape, so in most other bodies, not propagated by seed, 'tis the colour we most fix on, and are most led by. Thus where we find the colour of gold, we are apt to imagine all the other qualities, comprehended in our complex idea, to be there also: and we commonly take these two obvious qualities, *viz*. shape and colour for so presumptive ideas of several species, that in a good picture, we readily say, this is a lion, and that a rose; this is a gold, and that a silver goblet, only by the different figures and colours, represented to the eye by the pencil.

Which yet serve for common converse

§30. But though this serves well enough for gross and confused conceptions, and unaccurate ways of talking and thinking; yet *men are far enough from having agreed on the precise number of simple ideas*, or qualities, *belonging to any sort of things, signified by its name*. Nor is it a wonder, since it requires much time, pains, and skill, strict inquiry, and long examination, to find out what, and how many those simple ideas are, which are constantly and inseparably united in nature, and are always to be found together in the same subject. Most men, wanting either time, inclination, or industry enough for this, even to some tolerable degree, content themselves with some few obvious, and outward appearances of things, thereby readily to distinguish and sort them for the common affairs of life: and so, without further examination, give them names, or take up the names already in use. Which, though in common conversation they pass well enough for the signs of some few obvious qualities co-existing, are yet far enough from comprehending, in a settled signification, a precise number of simple ideas; much less all those, which are united in nature. He that shall consider, after so much stir, about *genus* and *species*, and such a deal of talk of specific differences, how few words we have yet settled definitions of, may, with reason, imagine, that those *forms*, which there hath been so much noise made about, are only chimeras; which give us no light into the specific natures of things. And he that shall consider, how far the names of substances are from having significations, wherein all who use them do agree, will have reason to conclude, that though the nominal essences of substances, are all supposed to be copied from nature; yet they are all, or most of them, very imperfect. Since the composition of those complex ideas, are, in several men, very different: and therefore, that these

boundaries of species, are as men, and not as nature makes them, if at least there are in nature any such prefixed bounds. 'Tis true, that many particular substances are so made by nature, that they have agreement and likeness one with another, and so afford a foundation of being ranked into sorts. But the sorting of things by us, or the making of determinate species, being in order to naming and comprehending them under general terms, I cannot see how it can be properly said, that nature sets the boundaries of the species of things: or if it be so, our boundaries of species, are not exactly conformable to those in nature. For we, having need of general names for present use, stay not for a perfect discovery of all those qualities, which would best show us their most material differences and agreements; but we ourselves divide them, by certain obvious appearances, into species, that we may the easier, under general names, communicate our thoughts about them. For having no other knowledge of any substance, but of the simple ideas, that are united in it; and observing several particular things to agree with others, in several of those simple ideas, we make that collection our specific idea, and give it a general name; that in recording our own thoughts, and in our discourse with others, we may in one short word, design all the individuals that agree in that complex idea, without enumerating the simple ideas, that make it up; and so not waste our time and breath in tedious descriptions: which we see they are fain to do, who would discourse of any new sort of things, they have not yet a name for.

Essences of species under the same name very different

§31. But however, these species of substances pass well enough in ordinary conversation, it is plain, that this complex idea, wherein they observe several individuals to agree, is, by different men, made very differently; by some more, and others less accurately. In some, this complex idea contains a greater, and in others a smaller number of qualities; and so is apparently such as the mind makes it. The yellow shining colour, makes *gold* to children; others add weight, malleableness, and fusibility; and others yet other qualities, which they find joined with that yellow colour, as constantly as its weight and fusibility: for in all these, and the like qualities, one has as good a right to be put into the complex idea of that substance, wherein they are all joined, as another. And therefore *different men* leaving out, or putting in several simple ideas, which others do not, according to their various examination, skill, or observation of that subject, *have different essences of gold*; which must therefore be of their own, and not of nature's making.

The more general our ideas are, the more incomplete and partial they are

§32. If the *number of simple ideas, that make the nominal essence* of the lowest species, or first sorting of individuals, *depends on the mind* of man, variously collecting them, it is much more evident, that they do so, in the more comprehensive *classes*, which, by the masters of logic[27] are called *genera*. These are complex ideas designedly imperfect: and 'tis visible at first sight, that several of those qualities, that are to be found in the things themselves, are purposely left out of *generical ideas*. For as the mind, to make general ideas, comprehending several particulars, leaves out those of time, and place, and such other, that make them incommunicable to more than one individual, so to make other yet more general ideas, that may comprehend different sorts, it leaves out those qualities that distinguish them, and puts into its new collection, only such ideas, as are common to several sorts. The same convenience that made men express several parcels of yellow matter coming from Guinea[28] and Peru, under one name, sets them also upon making of one name, that may comprehend both gold, and silver, and some other bodies of different sorts. This is done by leaving out those qualities, which are peculiar to each sort; and retaining a complex idea, made up of those, that are common to them all. To which the name *metal* being annexed, there is a *genus* constituted; the essence whereof being that abstract idea, containing only malleableness and fusibility, with certain degrees of weight and fixedness, wherein some bodies of several kinds agree, leaves out the colour, and other qualities peculiar to gold, and silver, and the other sorts comprehended under the name *metal*. Whereby it is plain, that men follow not exactly the patterns set them by nature, when they make their general ideas of substances; since there is no body to be found, which has barely malleableness and fusibility in it, without other qualities as inseparable as those. But men, in making their general ideas, seeking more the convenience of language and quick dispatch, by short and comprehensive signs, than the true and precise nature of things, as they exist, have, in the framing their abstract ideas, chiefly pursued that end, which was, to be furnished with store of general, and variously comprehensive names. So that in this whole business of *genera* and *species*, the *genus*, or more comprehensive, is but a partial conception of what is in the *species*, and the *species*, but a partial idea of what is to be found in each individual. If therefore anyone will think, that a *man*, and a *horse*, and an animal, and a plant, *etc.* are distinguished by real essences made by nature, he must think nature to be very liberal of these real essences, making one for body, another for an animal, and another for a horse; and all these

essences liberally bestowed upon Bucephalus. But if we would rightly consider what is done, in all these *genera* and *species*, or sorts, we should find, that there is no new thing made, but only more or less comprehensive signs whereby we may be enabled to express, in a few syllables, great numbers of particular things, as they agree in more or less general conceptions, which we have framed to that purpose. In all which, we may observe, that the more general term, is always the name of a less complex idea; and that each *genus* is but a partial conception of the *species* comprehended under it. So that if these abstract general ideas be thought to be complete, it can only be in respect of a certain established relation, between them and certain names, which are made use of to signify them; and not in respect of anything existing, as made by nature.

This all accommodated to the end of speech

§33. *This* is *adjusted to the true end of speech*, which is to be the easiest and shortest way of communicating our notions. For thus he, that would make and discourse of things, as they agreed in the complex idea of extension and solidity, needed but use the word *body*, to denote all such. He that, to these, would join others, signified by the words life, sense, and spontaneous motion, needed but use the word *animal*, to signify all which partaked of those ideas: and he that had made a complex idea of a body, with life, sense, and motion, with the faculty of reasoning, and a certain shape joined to it, needed but use the short monosyllable *man*, to express all particulars that correspond to that complex idea. This is the proper business of *genus* and *species*: and this men do, without any consideration of *real essences*, or *substantial forms*, which come not within the reach of our knowledge, when we think of those things; nor within the signification of our words, when we discourse with others.

Instance in cassowaries

§34. Were I to talk with anyone, of a sort of birds, I lately saw in St James's Park,[29] about three or four foot high, with a covering of something between feathers and hair, of a dark brown colour, without wings, but in the place thereof, two or three little branches, coming down like sprigs of Spanish broom;[30] long great legs, with feet only of three claws, and without a tail; I must make this description of it, and so may make others understand me: but when I am told, that the name of it is *cassowary*,[31] I may then use that word to stand in discourse for all my complex idea mentioned in that description; though by that word, which is now become a specific name, I know no more of the real essence, or constitution of that sort of animals, than I did before; and knew probably as much of the nature of that species of birds, before I learned the name, as many Englishmen do

of swans, or herons, which are specific names, very well known of sorts of birds common in England.

Men determine the sorts

§35. From what has been said, 'tis evident, that *men make sorts of things*. For it being different essences alone, that make different species, 'tis plain, that they who make those abstract ideas, which are the nominal essences, do thereby make the species, or sort. Should there be a body found, having all the other qualities of gold, except malleableness, 'twould, no doubt, be made a question whether it were gold or no; *i.e.* whether it were of that species. This could be determined only by that abstract idea, to which everyone annexed the name *gold*: so that it would be true gold to him, and belong to that species, who included not malleableness in his nominal essence, signified by the sound *gold*; and on the other side, it would not be true gold, or of that species to him, who included malleableness in his specific idea. And who, I pray, is it, that makes these divers species, even under one and the same name, but men that make two different abstract ideas, consisting not exactly of the same collection of qualities? Nor is it a mere supposition to imagine, that a body may exist, wherein the other obvious qualities of gold may be without malleableness; since it is certain, that gold itself will be sometimes so eager,[32] (as artists[33] call it) that it will as little endure the hammer, as glass itself. What we have said, of the putting in, or leaving out of malleableness out of the complex idea, the name *gold* is, by anyone, annexed to, may be said of its peculiar weight, fixedness, and several other the like qualities: for whatsoever is left out, or put in, 'tis still the complex idea, to which that name is annexed, that makes the species: and as any particular parcel of matter answers that idea, so the name of the sort belongs truly to it; and it is of that species. And thus anything is true *gold*, perfect *metal*. All which determination of the species, 'tis plain, depends on the understanding of man, making this or that complex idea.

Nature makes the similitude

§36. This then, in short, is the case: *nature makes many particular things, which do agree* one with another, in many sensible qualities, and probably too, in their internal frame and constitution: but 'tis not this real essence that distinguishes them into species; 'tis *men*, who, taking occasion from the qualities they find united in them, and wherein, they observe often several individuals to agree, *range them into sorts, in order to their naming*, for the convenience of comprehensive signs; under which individuals, according to their conformity to this or that abstract idea, come to be ranked as under ensigns:[34] so that this is of the blue, that the red regiment;

this is a man, that a drill: and in this, I think, consists the whole business of *genus* and *species*.

§37. I do not deny, but nature, in the constant production of particular beings, makes them not always new and various, but very much alike and of kin one to another: but I think it nevertheless true, that *the boundaries of the species, whereby men sort them, are made by men*; since the essences of the species, distinguished by different names, are, as has been proved, of man's making, and seldom adequate to the internal nature of the things they are taken from. So that we may truly say, such a manner of sorting of things, is the workmanship of men.

Each abstract idea is an essence

§38. One thing, I doubt not, but will seem very strange in this doctrine; which is, that from what hath been said, it will follow, that *each abstract idea, with a name to it, makes a distinct species*. But who can help it, if truth will have it so? For so it must remain, till somebody can show us the species of things, limited and distinguished by something else; and let us see, that general terms signify not our abstract ideas, but something different from them. I would fain know, why a shock[35] and a hound, are not as distinct species, as a spaniel and an elephant. We have no other idea of the different essence of an elephant and a spaniel, than we have of the different essence of a shock and a hound; all the essential difference, whereby we know and distinguish them one from another, consisting only in the different collection of simple ideas, to which we have given those different names.

Genera *and* species *are in order to naming*

§39. How much *the making of species and genera is in order to general names*, and how much general names are necessary, if not to the being, yet at least to the completing of a species, and making it pass for such, will appear, besides what has been said above concerning ice and water, in a very familiar example. A silent and a striking *watch*, are but one species, to those who have but one name for them: but he that has the name *watch* for one, and *clock* for the other, and distinct complex ideas, to which those names belong, to him they are different species. It will be said, perhaps, that the inward contrivance and constitution is different between these two, which the watch-maker has a clear idea of. And yet, 'tis plain, they are but one species to him, when he has but one name for them. For what is sufficient in the inward contrivance, to make a new species? There are some *watches*, that are made with four wheels, others with five: is this a specific difference to the workman? Some have strings and fusees,[36] and others none; some have the balance loose, and

others regulated by a spiral spring, and others by hog's bristles:[37] are any, or all of these enough to make a specific difference to the workman, that knows each of these, and several other different contrivances, in the internal constitutions of *watches*? 'Tis certain, each of these hath a real difference from the rest: but whether it be an essential, a specific difference or no, relates only to the complex idea, to which the name *watch* is given: as long as they all agree in the idea which that name stands for, and that name does not as a generical name comprehend different species under it, they are not essentially nor specifically different. But if anyone will make minuter divisions from differences, that he knows in the internal frame of watches; and to such precise complex ideas, give names that shall prevail, they will then be new species to them, who have those ideas with names to them; and can, by those differences, distinguish watches into these several sorts, and then *watch* will be a generical name. But yet they would be no distinct species to men, ignorant of clockwork, and the inward contrivances of watches, who had no other idea, but the outward shape and bulk, with the marking of the hours by the hand. For to them, all those other names would be but synonymous terms for the same idea, and signify no more, nor no other thing but a *watch*. Just thus, I think, it is in natural things. Nobody will doubt, that the wheels, or springs (if I may so say) within, are different in a *rational man*, and a *changeling*,[38] no more than that there is a difference in the frame between a *drill*[39] and a *changeling*. But whether one, or both these differences be essential, or specifical, is only to be known to us, by their agreement, or disagreement with the complex idea that the name *man* stands for: for by that alone can it be determined, whether one, or both, or neither of those be a man, or no.

Species of artificial things less confused than natural

§40. From what has been before said, we may see the reason, *why, in the species of artificial things, there is generally less confusion and uncertainty, than in natural.* Because an *artificial* thing being a production of man, which the artificer designed, and therefore well knows the idea of, the name of it is supposed to stand for no other idea, nor to import any other essence, than what is certainly to be known, and easy enough to be apprehended. For the idea, or essence, of the several sorts of *artificial* things, consisting, for the most part, in nothing but the determinate figure of sensible parts; and sometimes motion depending thereon, which the artificer fashions in matter, such as he finds for his turn, it is not beyond the reach of our faculties to attain a certain idea thereof; and so settle the signification of the names, whereby the species of *artificial*

things are distinguished, with less doubt, obscurity, and equivocation, than we can in things natural, whose differences and operations depend upon contrivances, beyond the reach of our discoveries.

Artificial things of distinct species

§41. I must be excused here, if I think, *artificial things are of distinct species*, as well as natural: since I find they are as plainly and orderly ranked into sorts, by different abstract ideas, with general names annexed to them, as distinct one from another as those of natural substances. For why should we not think a watch, and pistol, as distinct species one from another, as a horse, and a dog, they being expressed in our minds by distinct ideas, and to others, by distinct appellations?

Substances alone have proper names

§42. This is further to be observed concerning *substances*, that they *alone* of all our several sorts of ideas, *have* particular, or *proper names*, whereby one only particular thing is signified. Because in simple ideas, modes, and relations, it seldom happens, that men have occasion to mention often this, or that particular, when it is absent. Besides, the greatest part of mixed modes, being actions, which perish in their birth, are not capable of a lasting duration, as substances, which are the actors; and wherein the simple ideas that make up the complex ideas designed by the name, have a lasting union.

Difficulty to treat of words

§43. I must beg pardon of my reader, for having dwelt so long upon this subject, and perhaps, with some obscurity. But I desire, it may be considered, how *difficult* it is, *to lead another by words into the thoughts of things, stripped of those specifical differences* we give them: which things, if I name not, I say nothing; and if I do name them, I thereby rank them into some sort, or other, and suggest to the mind the usual abstract idea of that species; and so cross my purpose. For to talk of a *man*, and to lay by, at the same time, the ordinary signification of the name man, which is our complex idea, usually annexed to it; and bid the reader consider *man*, as he is in himself, and as he is really distinguished from others, in his internal constitution, or real essence, that is, by something, he knows not what, looks like trifling: and yet thus one must do, who would speak of the supposed real essences and species of things, as thought to be made by nature, if it be but only to make it understood, that there is no such thing signified by the general names, which substances are called by. But because it is difficult by known familiar names to do this, give me leave to endeavour by an example, to make the different consideration, the mind has of specific names and ideas, a little more clear; and to show how the complex ideas of modes, are referred sometimes to archetypes in the minds of other

intelligent beings; or which is the same, to the signification annexed by others to their received names; and sometimes to no archetypes at all. Give me leave also to show how the mind always refers its ideas of substances, either to the substances themselves, or to the signification of their names, as to the archetypes; and also to make plain the nature of species, or sorting of things, as apprehended, and made use of by us; and of the essences belonging to those species, which is, perhaps, of more moment, to discover the extent and certainty of our knowledge, than we at first imagine.

Instance of mixed modes in kinneah *and* niouph

§44. Let us suppose Adam in the state of a grown man, with a good understanding, but in a strange country, with all things new, and unknown about him; and no other faculties, to attain the knowledge of them, but what one of this age has now. He observes Lamech[40] more melancholy than usual, and imagines it to be from a suspicion he has of his wife Adah (whom he most ardently loved) that she had too much kindness for another man. Adam discourses these his thoughts to Eve, and desires her to take care that Adah commit not folly: and in these discourses with Eve, he makes use of these two new words, *kinneah* and *niouph*. In time, Adam's mistake appears, for he finds Lamech's trouble proceeded from having killed a man: but yet the two names, *kinneah* and *niouph*; the one standing for suspicion, in a husband, of his wife's disloyalty to him, and the other, for the act of committing disloyalty, lost not their distinct significations. It is plain then, that here were two distinct complex ideas of mixed modes, with names to them, two distinct species of actions essentially different; I ask wherein consisted the essences of these two distinct species of actions? And 'tis plain, it consisted in a precise combination of simple ideas, different in one from the other. I ask, whether the complex idea in Adam's mind, which he called *kinneah*, were adequate, or no? And it is plain it was, for it being a combination of simple ideas, which he without any regard to any archetype, without respect to anything as a pattern, voluntarily put together, abstracted and gave the name *kinneah* to, to express in short to others, by that one sound, all the simple ideas contained and united in that complex one, it must necessarily follow, that it was an adequate idea. His own choice having made that combination, it had all in it he intended it should, and so could not but be perfect, could not but be adequate, it being referred to no other archetype, which it was supposed to represent.

§45. These words, *kinneah* and *niouph*, by degrees grew into common use; and then the case was somewhat altered. Adam's children had the same

faculties, and thereby the same power that he had, to make what complex ideas of mixed modes they pleased in their own minds; to abstract them, and make what sounds, they pleased, the signs of them: but the use of names being to make our ideas within us known to others, that cannot be done, but when the same sign stands for the same idea in two, who would communicate their thoughts, and discourse together. Those therefore of Adam's children, that found these two words, *kinneah* and *niouph*, in familiar use, could not take them for insignificant sounds; but must needs conclude, they stood for something, for certain ideas, abstract ideas, they being general names, which abstract ideas were the essences of the species distinguished by those names. If therefore they would use these words, as names of species already established and agreed on, they were obliged to conform the ideas, in their minds, signified by these names, to the ideas, that they stood for in other men's minds, as to their patterns and archetypes; and then indeed their ideas of these complex modes were liable to be inadequate, as being very apt (especially those that consisted of combinations of many simple ideas) not to be exactly conformable to the ideas in other men's minds, using the same names; though for this, there be usually a remedy at hand, which is, to ask the meaning of any word, we understand not, of him that uses it: it being as impossible, to know certainly, what the words jealousy and adultery (which I think answer קנאה and נאוף) stand for in another man's mind, with whom I would discourse about them; as it was impossible, in the beginning of language, to know what *kinneah* and *niouph* stood for in another man's mind, without explication, they being voluntary signs in everyone.

Instance of substances in zahab

§46. Let us now also consider after the same manner, the names of substances, in their first application. One of Adam's children, roving in the mountains, lights on a glittering substance, which pleases his eye, home he carries it to Adam, who, upon consideration of it, finds it to be hard, to have a bright yellow colour, and an exceeding great weight. These, perhaps at first, are all the qualities, he takes notice of in it, and abstracting this complex idea, consisting of a substance having that peculiar bright yellowness, and a weight very great in proportion to its bulk, he gives it the name *zahab*, to denominate and mark all substances, that have these sensible qualities in them. 'Tis evident now that, in this case, Adam acts quite differently, from what he did before in forming those ideas of mixed modes, to which he gave the name *kinneah* and *niouph*. For there he put ideas together, only by his own imagination, not taken from the existence of anything; and to them he gave names to denominate all

things, that should happen to agree to those his abstract ideas, without considering whether any such thing did exist, or no; the standard there was of his own making. But in the forming his idea of this new substance he takes the quite contrary course; here he has standard made by nature; and therefore being to represent that to himself, by the idea he has of it, even when it is absent, he puts in no simple idea into his complex one, but what he has the perception of from the thing itself. He takes care that his idea be conformable to this archetype, and intends the name should stand for an idea so conformable.

§47. This piece of matter, thus denominated *zahab* by Adam, being quite different from any he had seen before, nobody, I think, will deny to be a distinct species, and to have its peculiar essence; and that the name *zahab* is the mark of the species, and a name belonging to all things partaking in that essence. But here it is plain, the essence, Adam made the name *zahab* stand for, was nothing but a body hard, shining, yellow, and very heavy. But the inquisitive mind of man, not content with the knowledge of these, as I may say, superficial qualities, puts Adam upon further examination of this matter. He therefore knocks, and beats it with flints, to see what was discoverable in the inside: he finds it yield to blows, but not easily separate into pieces: he finds it will bend without breaking. Is not now ductility to be added to his former idea, and made part of the essence of the species, that name *zahab* stands for? Further trials discover fusibility, and fixedness.[41] Are not they also, by the same reason, that any of the others were, to be put into the complex idea, signified by the name *zahab*? If not, what reason will there be shown more for the one than the other? If these must, then all the other properties, which any further trials shall discover in this matter, ought by the same reason to make a part of the ingredients of the complex idea, which the name *zahab* stands for, and so be the essence of the species, marked by that name. Which properties, because they are endless, it is plain, that the idea made after this fashion by this archetype, will be always inadequate.

Their ideas imperfect, and therefore various

§48. But this is not all, it would also follow, that the *names of substances* would not only have, (as in truth they have) but would also be supposed to *have different significations, as used by different men*, which would very much cumber the use of language. For if every distinct quality, that were discovered in any matter by anyone, were supposed to make a necessary part of the complex idea, signified by the common name given it, it must follow, that men must suppose the same word to signify

different things in different men: since they cannot doubt, but different men may have discovered several qualities in substances of the same denomination, which others know nothing of.

Therefore to fix their species, a real essence is supposed

§49. To avoid this therefore, they have *supposed a real essence belonging to every species*, from which these properties all flow, and would have their name of the species stand for that. But they not having any idea of that real essence in substances, and their words signifying nothing but the ideas they have, that which is done by this attempt, is only to put the name or sound, in the place and stead of the thing having that real essence, without knowing what the real essence is; and this is that which men do, when they speak of species of things, as supposing them made by nature, and distinguished by real essences.

Which supposition is of no use

§50. For let us consider, when we affirm, that all *gold* is fixed, either it means that fixedness is a part of the definition, part of the nominal essence the word *gold* stands for; and so this affirmation, 'all gold is fixed', contains nothing but the signification of the term *gold*. Or else it means, that fixedness not being a part of the definition of the word *gold*, is a property of that substance itself: in which case, it is plain, that the word *gold* stands in the place of a substance, having the real essence of a species of things, made by nature. In which way of substitution, it has so confused and uncertain a signification, that though this proposition, 'gold is fixed', be in that sense an affirmation of something real; yet 'tis a truth will always fail us in its particular application, and so is of no real use nor certainty. For let it be never so true, that all *gold*, *i.e.* all that has the real essence of *gold*, is fixed, what serves this for, whilst we know not in this sense, what is or is not *gold*? For if we know not the real essence, of *gold*, 'tis impossible we should know what parcel of matter has that essence, and so whether it be true *gold* or no.

Conclusion

§51. To conclude; what liberty Adam had at first to make any complex ideas of mixed modes, by no other pattern, but by his own thoughts, the same have all men ever since had. And the same necessity of conforming his ideas of substances to things without him, as to archetypes made by nature, that Adam was under, if he would not wilfully impose upon himself, the same are all men ever since under too. The same liberty also, that Adam had of affixing any new name to any idea, the same has anyone still, (especially the beginners of languages, if we can imagine any such,) but only with this difference, that in places, where men in society have already established a language amongst them, the signification of words are very

warily and sparingly to be altered. Because men being furnished already with names for their ideas, and common use having appropriated known names to certain ideas, an affected misapplication of them cannot but be very ridiculous. He that hath new notions, will, perhaps, venture sometimes on the coining new terms to express them: but men think it a boldness, and 'tis uncertain, whether common use will ever make them pass for current. But in communication with others, it is necessary, that we conform the ideas we make the vulgar words of any language stand for, to their known proper significations, (which I have explained at large already,) or else to make known that new signification, we apply them to.

CHAPTER VII

Of Particles

Particles connect parts, or whole sentences together

§1. Besides words, which are names of ideas in the mind, there are a great many others that are made use of, to signify the *connexion* that the mind gives to *ideas, or propositions, one with another*. The mind, in communicating its thought to others, does not only need signs of the ideas it has then before it, but others also, to show or intimate some particular action of its own, at that time, relating to those ideas. This it does several ways; as, *is*, and *is not*, are the general marks of the mind, affirming or denying. But besides affirmation, or negation, without which, there is in words no truth or falsehood, the mind does, in declaring its sentiments to others, connect, not only the parts of propositions, but whole sentences one to another, with their several relations and dependencies, to make a coherent discourse.

In them consists the art of well speaking

§2. The words, whereby it signifies what connexion it gives to the several affirmations and negations, that it unites in one continued reasoning or narration, are generally called *particles*: and 'tis in the right use of these, that more particularly consists the clearness and beauty of a good style. To think well, it is not enough, that a man has ideas clear and distinct in his thoughts, nor that he observes the agreement, or disagreement of some of them; but he must think in train, and observe the dependence of his thoughts and reasonings, one upon another: and to

express well such methodical and rational thoughts, he must have words to *show* what *connexion, restriction, distinction, opposition, emphasis*, etc. he gives to each respective *part of his discourse*. To mistake in any of these, is to puzzle, instead of informing, his hearer: and therefore it is, that those words, which are not truly, by themselves, the names of any ideas, are of such constant and indispensable use in language, and do much contribute to men's well expressing themselves.

They show what relation the mind gives to its own thoughts

§3. This part of grammar has been, perhaps, as much neglected, as some others over-diligently cultivated. 'Tis easy for men to write, one after another, of *cases* and *genders*, *moods* and *tenses*, *gerunds* and *supines*:[1] in these and the like, there has been great diligence used; and particles themselves, in some languages, have been, with great show of exactness, ranked into their several orders. But though *prepositions* and *conjunctions*, etc. are names well known in grammar, and the particles contained under them carefully ranked into their distinct subdivisions; yet he who would show the right use of particles, and what significancy and force they have, must take a little more pains, enter into his own thoughts, and observe nicely the several postures of his mind in discoursing.

§4. Neither is it enough, for the explaining of these words, to render them, as is usually in dictionaries, by words of another tongue which came nearest to their signification: for what is meant by them, is commonly as hard to be understood in one, as another language. They are all *marks of some action, or intimation of the mind*; and therefore to understand them rightly, the several views, postures, stands, turns, limitations, and exceptions, and several other thoughts of the mind, for which we have either none, or very deficient names, are diligently to be studied. Of these, there are a great variety, much exceeding the number of particles, that most languages have, to express them by: and therefore it is not to be wondered, that most of these particles have divers, and sometimes almost opposite significations. In the Hebrew tongue, there is a particle consisting but of one single letter, of which there are reckoned up, as I remember, seventy, I am sure above fifty several significations.

§5. BUT is a particle, none more familiar in our language: *Instance in* BUT and he that says it is a discretive[2] conjunction, and that it answers *sed* in Latin, or *mais* in French, thinks he has sufficiently explained it. But it seems to me to intimate several relations, the mind gives to the several propositions or parts of them, which it joins by this monosyllable.

First, 'BUT to say no more': here it intimates a stop of the mind, in the course it was going, before it came to the end of it.

Secondly, 'I saw BUT two plants': here it shows, that the mind limits the sense to what is expressed, with a negation of all other.

Thirdly, 'You pray; BUT it is not that GOD would bring you to the true religion.'

Fourthly, 'BUT that he would confirm you in your own': The first of these BUTS intimates a supposition in the mind, of something otherwise than it should be; the latter shows, that the mind makes a direct opposition between that, and what goes before it.

Fifthly, 'All animals have sense; BUT a dog is an animal': here it signifies little more, but that the latter proposition is joined to the former, as the *minor* of a syllogism.[3]

§6. To these, I doubt not, might be added a great many other significations of this particle, if it were my business to examine it in its full latitude, and consider it in all the places it is to be found: which if one should do, I doubt, whether in all those manners it is made use of, it would deserve the title of *discretive*, which grammarians give to it. But I intend not here a full explication of this sort of signs. The instances I have given in this one, may give occasion to reflect upon their use and force in language, and lead us into the contemplation of several actions of our minds in discoursing, which it has found a way to intimate to others by these particles, some whereof constantly, and others in certain constructions, have the sense of a whole sentence contained in them.

CHAPTER VIII

Of Abstract and Concrete Terms

Abstract terms not predicable one of another, and why

§1. The ordinary words of language, and our common use of them, would have given us light into the nature of our ideas, if they had been but considered with attention. The mind, as has been shown, has a power to abstract its ideas, and so they become essences, general essences, whereby the sorts of things are distinguished. Now each abstract idea being distinct, so that of any two the one can never

be the other, the mind will, by its intuitive knowledge, perceive their difference; and therefore in propositions, no two whole ideas can ever be affirmed one of another. This we see in the common use of language, which permits *not any two abstract words, or names of abstract ideas*, to be *affirmed one of another*. For how near of kin soever they may seem to be, and how certain soever it is, that man is an animal, or rational, or white, yet everyone, at first hearing, perceives the falsehood of these propositions; *humanity is animality*, or *rationality*, or *whiteness*: and this is as evident, as any of the most allowed maxims. All our affirmations then are only in concrete, which is the affirming, not one abstract idea to be another, but one abstract idea to be joined to another; which abstract ideas, in substances, may be of any sort; in all the rest, are little else but of relations; and in substances, the most frequent are of powers; *v.g.* 'a man is white', signifies, that the thing that has the essence of a man, has also in it the essence of whiteness, which is nothing but a power to produce the idea of whiteness in one, whose eyes can discover ordinary objects; or 'a man is rational', signifies, that the same thing, that hath the essence of a man, hath also in it the essence of rationality, *i.e.* a power of reasoning.

They show the difference of our ideas

§2. This distinction of names, shows us also the difference of our ideas: for if we observe them, we shall find, that our *simple ideas have all abstract, as well as concrete names*: the one whereof is (to speak the language of grammarians) a substantive, the other an adjective; as whiteness, white, sweetness, sweet. The like also holds in our ideas of *modes* and relations; as justice, just; equality, equal; only with this difference, that some of the concrete names of relations, amongst men chiefly, are substantives; as *paternitas*, *pater*;[1] whereof it were easy to render a reason. But as to our ideas of *substances*, we have very few or *no abstract names* at all. For though the Schools have introduced *animalitas*, *humanitas*, *corporietas*,[2] and some others; yet they hold no proportion with that infinite number of names of substances, to which they never were ridiculous enough to attempt the coining of abstract ones: and those few that the Schools forged, and put into the mouths of their scholars, could never yet get admittance into common use, or obtain the licence of public approbation. Which seems to me at least to intimate the confession of all mankind, that they have no ideas of the real essences of substances, since they have not names for such ideas: which no doubt they would have had, had not their consciousness to themselves of their ignorance of them, kept them from so idle an attempt. And therefore though they had ideas enough to distinguish gold from a

stone, and metal from wood; yet they but timorously ventured on such terms, as *aurietas* and *saxietas*, *metallietas* and *lignietas*,[3] or the like names, which should pretend to signify the real essences of those substances, whereof they knew they had no ideas. And indeed, it was only the doctrine of *substantial forms*,[4] and the confidence of mistaken pretenders to a knowledge that they had not, which first coined, and then introduced *animalitas*, and *humanitas*, and the like; which yet went very little further than their own Schools, and could never get to be current amongst understanding men. Indeed, *humanitas* was a word familiar amongst the Romans; but in a far different sense, and stood not for the abstract essence of any substance; but was the abstract name of a mode, and its concrete *humanus*, not *homo*.[5]

CHAPTER IX

Of the Imperfection of Words

Words are used for recording and communicating our thoughts

§1. From what has been said in the foregoing chapters, it is easy to perceive, what imperfection there is in language, and how the very nature of words, makes it almost unavoidable, for many of them to be doubtful and uncertain in their significations. To examine the perfection, or imperfection of words, it is necessary first to consider their use and end: for as they are more or less fitted to attain that, so are they more or less perfect. We have, in the former part of this discourse, often, upon occasion, mentioned *a double use of words*.

First, one for the recording of our own thoughts.

Secondly, the other for the communicating of our thoughts to others.

Any words will serve for recording

§2. As to the first of these, *for the recording our own thoughts* for the help of our own memories, whereby, as it were, we talk to ourselves, any words will serve the turn. For since sounds are voluntary and indifferent signs of any ideas, a man may use what words he pleases, to signify his own ideas to himself: and there will be no imperfection in them, if he constantly use the same sign for the same idea: for then he cannot fail of having his meaning understood, wherein consists the right use and perfection of language.

§3. *Secondly*, As to *communication of words*, that too *has a double use.* *Communication by words civil or philosophical*

I. *Civil.*

II. *Philosophical.*

First, By their *civil use*, I mean such a communication of thoughts and ideas by words, as may serve for the upholding common conversation and commerce, about the ordinary affairs and conveniencies of civil life, in the societies of men one amongst another.

Secondly, by the *philosophical use* of words, I mean such an use of them, as may serve to convey the precise notions of things, and to express, in general propositions, certain and undoubted truths, which the mind may rest upon, and be satisfied with, in its search after true knowledge. These two uses are very distinct; and a great deal less exactness will serve in the one, than in the other, as we shall see in what follows.

The imperfections of words is the doubtfulness of their signification

§4. The chief end of language in communication being to be understood, words serve not well for that end, neither in civil, nor philosophical discourse, when any word does not excite in the hearer, the same idea which it stands for in the mind of the speaker. Now since sounds have no natural connexion with our ideas, but have all their signification from the arbitrary imposition of men, the *doubtfulness* and uncertainty *of their signification*, which *is the imperfection* we here are speaking of, has its cause more in the ideas they stand for, than in any incapacity there is in one sound, more than in another, to signify any idea: for in that regard, they are all equally perfect.

That then which makes doubtfulness and uncertainty in the signification of some more than other words, is the difference of ideas they stand for.

Causes of their imperfection

§5. Words having naturally no signification, the idea which each stands for, must be learned and retained by those, who would exchange thoughts, and hold intelligible discourse with others, in any language. But this is hardest to be done, where,

First, the ideas they stand for, are very complex, and made up of a great number of ideas put together.

Secondly, where the ideas they stand for, have no certain connexion in nature; and so no settled standard, anywhere in nature existing, to rectify and adjust them by.

Thirdly, where the signification of the word is referred to a standard, which standard is not easy to be known.

Fourthly, where the signification of the word, and the real essence of the thing, are not exactly the same.

These are difficulties that attend the signification of several words that are intelligible. Those which are not intelligible at all, such as names standing for any simple ideas, which another has not organs or faculties to attain; as the names of colours to a blind man, or sounds to a deaf man, need not here be mentioned.

In all these cases, we shall find an imperfection in words; which I shall more at large explain, in their particular application to our several sorts of ideas: for if we examine them, we shall find, that the *names of mixed modes are most liable to doubtfulness and imperfection, for the two first of these reasons; and the names of substances chiefly for the two latter.*

The names of mixed modes doubtful. First, because the ideas they stand for, are so complex

§6. *First*, the names of *mixed modes*, are many of them liable to great uncertainty and obscurity in their signification.

I. *Because of* that great *composition*, these complex ideas are often made up of. To make words serviceable to the end of communication, it is necessary, (as has been said) that they excite, in the hearer, exactly the same idea, they stand for in the mind of the speaker. Without this, men fill one another's heads with noise and sounds; but convey not thereby their thoughts, and lay not before one another their ideas, which is the end of discourse and language. But when a word stands for a very complex idea, that is compounded and decompounded, it is not easy for men to form and retain that idea so exactly, as to make the name in common use, stand for the same precise idea, without any the least variation. Hence it comes to pass, that men's names, of very compound ideas, such as for the most part are moral words, have seldom, in two different men, the same precise signification; since one man's complex idea seldom agrees with another's, and often differs from his own, from that which he had yesterday, or will have tomorrow.

Secondly, because they have no standards

§7. II. *Because the names of mixed modes*, for the most part, *want standards* in nature, whereby men may rectify and adjust their significations; therefore they are very various and doubtful. They are assemblages of ideas put together at the pleasure of the mind, pursuing its own ends of discourse, and suited to its own notions; whereby it designs not to copy anything really existing, but to denominate and rank things, as they come to agree, with those archetypes or forms it has made. He that first brought the word *sham*, *wheedle*, or *banter* in use, put together,

as he thought fit, those ideas he made it stand for: and as it is with any new names of modes, that are now brought into any language; so was it with the old ones, when they were first made use of. Names therefore, that stand for collections of ideas, which the mind makes at pleasure, must needs be of doubtful signification, when such collections are nowhere to be found constantly united in nature, nor any patterns to be shown whereby men may adjust them. What the word *murder*, or *sacrilege*, *etc.* signifies, can never be known from things themselves: there be many of the parts of those complex ideas, which are not visible in the action itself, the intention of the mind, or the relation of holy things, which make a part of *murder*, or *sacrilege*, have no necessary connexion with the outward and visible action of him that commits either: and the pulling the trigger of the gun, with which the murder is committed, and is all the action, that, perhaps, is visible, has no natural connexion with those other ideas, that make up the complex one, named *murder*. They have their union and combination only from the understanding which unites them under one name: but uniting them without any rule, or pattern, it cannot be but that the signification of the name, that stands for such voluntary collections, should be often various in the minds of different men, who have scarce any standing rule to regulate themselves, and their notions by, in such arbitrary ideas.

Propriety not a sufficient remedy

§8. 'Tis true, *common use*, that is the rule of propriety, may be supposed here to afford some aid, to settle the signification of language; and it cannot be denied, but that in some measure it does. Common use *regulates the meaning of words* pretty well for common conversation; but nobody having an authority to establish the precise signification of words, nor determine to what ideas anyone shall annex them, common use is not sufficient to adjust them to philosophical discourses; there being scarce any name, of any very complex idea, (to say nothing of others,) which, in common use, has not a great latitude, and which keeping within the bounds of propriety, may not be made the sign of far different ideas. Besides the rule and measure of propriety itself being nowhere established, it is often matter of dispute, whether this or that way of using a word, be propriety of speech, or no. From all which, it is evident, that the names of such kind of very complex ideas, are naturally liable to this imperfection, to be of doubtful and uncertain signification; and even in men, that have a mind to understand one another, do not always stand for the same idea in speaker and hearer. Though the names *glory* and *gratitude* be the same in every man's mouth, through a whole country, yet the complex collective

idea, which everyone thinks on, or intends by that name, is apparently very different in men using the same language.

The way of learning these names contributes also to their doubtfulness

§9. *The way* also *wherein the names of mixed modes are ordinarily learned, does* not a little *contribute to the doubtfulness of their signification.* For if we will observe how children learn languages, we shall find, that to make them understand what the names of simple ideas, or substances, stand for, people ordinarily show them the thing, whereof they would have them have the idea; and then repeat to them the name that stands for it, as *white, sweet, milk, sugar, cat, dog.* But as for mixed modes, especially the most material of them, moral words, the sounds are usually learned first, and then to know what complex ideas they stand for, they are either beholden to the explication of others, or (which happens for the most part) are left to their own observation and industry; which being little laid out in the search of the true and precise meaning of names, these moral words are, in most men's mouths, little more than bare sounds; or when they have any, 'tis for the most part but a very loose and undetermined, and consequently obscure and confused signification. And even those themselves, who have with more attention settled their notions, do yet hardly avoid the inconvenience, to have them stand for complex ideas, different from those which other, even intelligent and studious men, make them the signs of. Where shall one find any, either *controversial debate*, or *familiar discourse*, concerning *honour, faith, grace, religion, church*, etc. wherein it is not easy to observe the different notions men have of them; which is nothing but this, that they are not agreed in the signification of those words; nor have in their minds the same complex ideas which they make them stand for: and so all the contests that follow thereupon, are only about the meaning of a sound. And hence we see, that in the interpretation of laws, whether divine, or human, there is no end; comments beget comments, and explications make new matter for explications: and of limiting, distinguishing, varying the signification of these moral words, there is no end. These ideas of men's making, are, by men still having the same power, multiplied *in infinitum.*[1] Many a man, who was pretty well satisfied of the meaning of a text of Scripture, or clause in the code, at first reading, has by consulting commentators, quite lost the sense of it, and, by those elucidations, given rise or increase to his doubts, and drawn obscurity upon the place. I say not this, that I think commentaries needless; but to show how uncertain the names of mixed modes naturally are, even in the mouths of those, who had both the intention and the faculty of speaking as clearly, as language was capable to express their thoughts.

Hence unavoidable obscurity in ancient authors

§10. What obscurity this has unavoidably brought upon the writings of men, who have lived in remote ages, and different countries, it will be needless to take notice. Since the numerous volumes of learned men, employing their thoughts that way, are proofs more than enough, to show what attention, study, sagacity, and reasoning is required, to find out the true meaning *of ancient authors*. But there being no writings we have any great concernment to be very solicitous about the meaning of, but those that contain either truths we are required to believe, or laws we are to obey, and draw inconveniences on us, when we mistake or transgress, we may be less anxious about the sense of other authors; who writing but their own opinions, we are under no greater necessity to know them, than they to know ours. Our good or evil depending not on their decrees, we may safely be ignorant of their notions: and therefore in the reading of them, if they do not use their words with a due clearness and perspicuity, we may lay them aside, and without any injury done them, resolve thus with ourselves,

Si non vis intelligi, debes negligi.[2]

§11. If the signification of the names of mixed modes are uncertain, because there be no real standards existing in nature, to which those ideas are referred, and by which they may be adjusted, the *names of substances are of a doubtful signification*, for a contrary reason, *viz. because the ideas*, they stand for, are supposed conformable to the reality of things, and are *referred to standards* made by nature. In our ideas of substances we have not the liberty as in mixed modes, to frame what combinations we think fit, to be the characteristical notes, to rank and denominate things by. In these we must follow nature, suit our complex ideas to real existences, and regulate the signification of their names by the things themselves, if we will have our names to be the signs of them, and stand for them. Here, 'tis true, we have patterns to follow; but patterns, that will make the signification of their names very uncertain: for names must be of a very unsteady and various meaning, if the ideas they stand for, be referred to standards without us, *that either cannot be known at all, or can be known but imperfectly and uncertainly.*

Names of substances referred, first, to real essences that cannot be known

§12. The *names of substances have*, as has been showed, a double *reference* in their ordinary use.

First, sometimes they are made to stand for, and so their signification is supposed to agree to, *the real constitution of things*, from which all their properties flow, and in which they all centre.

But this real constitution, or (as it is apt to be called) essence, being utterly unknown to us, any sound that is put to stand for it, must be very uncertain in its application; and it will be impossible to know, what things are, or ought to be called an *horse*, or *antimony*,[3] when those words are put for real essences, that we have no ideas of at all. And therefore in this supposition, the names of substances being referred to standards that cannot be known, their significations can never be adjusted and established by those standards.

Secondly, to co-existing qualities, which are known but imperfectly

§13. *Secondly*, the *simple ideas* that are found to *co-exist in substances*, being that which their names immediately signify, these, as united in the several sorts of things, *are* the proper *standards* to which their names are referred, and by which their significations may best be rectified. But neither will these archetypes so well serve to this purpose, as to leave these names, without very various and uncertain significations. Because these simple ideas that co-exist, and are united in the same subject, being very numerous, and having all an equal right to go into the complex specific idea, which the specific name is to stand for, men, though they propose to themselves the very same subject to consider, yet frame very different ideas about it; and so the name they use for it, unavoidably comes to have, in several men, very different significations. The simple qualities which make up the complex ideas, being most of them powers, in relation to changes, which they are apt to make in, or receive from other bodies, are almost infinite. He that shall but observe, what a great variety of alterations any one of the baser metals[4] is apt to receive, from the different application only of fire; and how much a greater number of changes any of them will receive in the hands of a chemist, by the application of other bodies, will not think it strange, that I count the properties of any sort of bodies not easy to be collected, and completely known by the ways of inquiry, which our faculties are capable of. They being therefore at least so many, that no man can know the precise and definite number, they are differently discovered by different men, according to their various skill, attention, and ways of handling; who therefore cannot choose but have different ideas of the same substance, and therefore make the signification of its common name very various and uncertain. For the complex ideas of substances, being made up of such simple ones as are supposed to co-exist in nature, everyone has a right to put into his complex idea, those qualities he has found to be united together. For though in the substance *gold*, one satisfies himself with colour and

weight, yet another thinks solubility in *aqua regia*,[5] as necessary to be joined with that colour in his idea of gold, as anyone does its fusibility; solubility in *aqua regia*, being a quality as constantly joined with its colour and weight, as fusibility, or any other; others put in its ductility or fixedness, *etc.* as they have been taught by tradition, or experience. Who of all these, has established the right signification of the word *gold*? Or who shall be the judge to determine? Each has his standard in nature, which he appeals to, and with reason thinks he has the same right to put into his complex idea, signified by the word *gold*, those qualities, which upon trial he has found united; as another, who has not so well examined, has to leave them out; or a third, who has made other trials, has to put in others. For the union in nature of these qualities, being the true ground of their union in one complex idea, who can say, one of them has more reason to be put in, or left out, than another? From whence it will always unavoidably follow, that the complex ideas of substances, in men using the same name for them, will be very various; and so the significations of those names, very uncertain.

§14. Besides, there is scarce any particular thing existing, which, in some of its simple ideas, does not communicate with a greater, and in others with a less number of particular beings: who shall determine in this case, which are those that are to make up the precise collection, that is to be signified by the specific name; or can with any just authority prescribe, which obvious or common qualities are to be left out; or which more secret, or more particular, are to be put into the signification of the name of any substance? All *which* together, seldom or never fail to *produce* that various and *doubtful signification in the names of substances*, which causes such uncertainty, disputes, or mistakes, when we come to a philosophical use of them.

With this imperfection, they may serve for civil, but not well for philosophical use

§15. 'Tis true, as *to civil and common conversation*, the general *names of substances*, regulated in their ordinary signification by some obvious qualities, (as by the shape and figure in things of known seminal propagation,[6] and in other substances, for the most part by colour, joined with some other sensible qualities,) *do well enough*, to design the things men would be understood to speak of: and so they usually conceive well enough the substances meant by the word *gold*, or *apple*, to distinguish the one from the other. *But in philosophical inquiries and debates*, where general truths *are* to be established, and consequences drawn from positions laid down, there the precise signification of the names of substances will be found, not only *not* to be *well established*, but also very hard to be so. For example, he that shall make

malleableness, or a certain degree of fixedness, a part of his complex idea of *gold*, may make propositions concerning gold, and draw consequences from them, that will truly and clearly follow from *gold*, taken in such a signification: But yet such as another man can never be forced to admit, nor be convinced of their truth, who makes not malleableness, or the same degree of fixedness, part of that complex idea, that the name *gold*, in his use of it, stands for.

Instance liquor §16. This is a natural, and almost unavoidable imperfection in almost all the names of substances, in all languages whatsoever, which men will easily find, when once passing from confused or loose notions, they come to more strict and close inquiries. For then they will be convinced, how doubtful and obscure those words are in their signification, which in ordinary use appeared very clear and determined. I was once in a meeting of very learned and ingenious physicians, where by chance there arose a question, whether any liquor passed through the filaments of the nerves. The debate having been managed a good while, by variety of arguments on both sides, I (who had been used to suspect, that the greatest part of disputes were more about the signification of words, than a real difference in the conception of things) desired, that before they went any further on in this dispute, they would first examine, and establish amongst them, what the word *liquor* signified. They at first were a little surprised at the proposal; and had they been persons less ingenious, they might perhaps have taken it for a very frivolous or extravagant one: since there was no one there, that thought not himself to understand very perfectly, what the word *liquor* stood for; which, I think too, none of the most perplexed names of substances. However, they were pleased to comply with my motion, and upon examination found, that the signification of that word, was not so settled and certain, as they had all imagined; but that each of them made it a sign of a different complex idea. This made them perceive, that the main of their dispute was about the signification of that term; and that they differed very little in their opinions, concerning some fluid and subtle matter, passing through the conduits of the nerves; though it was not so easy to agree whether it was to be called *liquor*, or no, a thing which when each considered, he thought it not worth the contending about.

Instance gold §17. How much this is the case in the greatest part of disputes, that men are engaged so hotly in, I shall, perhaps, have an occasion in another place to take notice. Let us only here consider a little more exactly the fore-mentioned instance of the word *gold*, and we shall see how hard it

is precisely to determine its signification. I think all agree, to make it stand for a body of a certain yellow shining colour; which being the idea to which children have annexed that name, the shining yellow part of a peacock's tail, is properly to them gold. Others finding fusibility joined with that yellow colour in certain parcels of matter, make of that combination a complex idea to which they give the name *gold* to denote a sort of substances; and so exclude from being *gold* all such yellow shining bodies, as by fire will be reduced to ashes, and admit to be of that species, or to be comprehended under that name *gold* only such substances as having that shining yellow colour will by fire be reduced to fusion, and not to ashes. Another by the same reason adds the weight, which being a quality, as straightly joined with that colour, as its fusibility, he thinks has the same reason to be joined in its idea, and to be signified by its name: and therefore the other made up of body, of such a colour and fusibility, to be imperfect; and so on of all the rest: wherein no one can show a reason, why some of the inseparable qualities, that are always united in nature, should be put into the nominal essence, and others left out: Or why the word *gold*, signifying that sort of body the ring on his finger is made of, should determine that sort, rather by its colour, weight, and fusibility; than by its colour, weight, and solubility in *aqua regia*:[7] since the dissolving it by that liquor, is as inseparable from it, as the fusion by fire; and they are both of them nothing, but the relation which that substance has to two other bodies, which have a power to operate differently upon it. For by what right is it, that fusibility comes to be a part of the essence, signified by the word *gold*, and solubility but a property of it? Or why is its colour part of the essence, and its malleableness but a property? That which I mean, is this, that these being all but properties, depending on its real constitution; and nothing but powers, either active or passive, in reference to other bodies, no one has authority to determine the signification of the word *gold*, (as referred to such a body existing in nature) more to one collection of ideas to be found in that body, than to another: whereby the signification of that name must unavoidably be very uncertain. Since, as has been said, several people observe several properties in the same substance; and, I think, I may say nobody all. And therefore we have but very imperfect descriptions of things, and words have very uncertain significations.

The names of simple ideas the least doubtful

§18. From what has been said, it is easy to observe, what has been before remarked, *viz.* that the *names of simple ideas are*, of all others the *least liable to mistakes*, and that for these reasons. *First*,

Because the ideas they stand for, being each but one single perception, are much easier got, and more clearly retained, than the more complex ones, and therefore are not liable to the uncertainty, which usually attends those compounded ones of *substances and mixed modes*, in which the precise number of simple ideas, that make them up, are not easily agreed, and so readily kept in mind. And *secondly*, because they are never referred to any other essence, but barely that perception they immediately signify: which reference is that, which renders the signification of the names of substances naturally so perplexed, and gives occasion to so many disputes. Men that do not perversely use their words, or on purpose set themselves to cavil, seldom mistake in any language, which they are acquainted with, the use and signification of the names of simple ideas: *white* and *sweet*, *yellow* and *bitter*, carry a very obvious meaning with them, which everyone precisely comprehends, or easily perceives he is ignorant of, and seeks to be informed. But what precise collection of simple ideas, *modesty*, or *frugality* stand for in another's use, is not so certainly known. And however we are apt to think, we well enough know, what is meant by *gold* or *iron*; yet the precise complex idea, others make them the signs of, is not so certain: and I believe it is very seldom that in speaker and hearer, they stand for exactly the same collection. Which must needs produce mistakes and disputes, when they are made use of in discourses, wherein men have to do with universal propositions, and would settle in their minds universal truths and consider the consequences, that follow from them.

And next to them simple modes

§19. By the same rule, the *names of simple modes are next to those of simple ideas, least liable to doubt and uncertainty*, especially those of figure and number, of which men have so clear and distinct ideas. Whoever, that had a mind to understand them, mistook the ordinary meaning of *seven*, or *a triangle*? And in general the least compounded ideas in every kind have the least dubious names.

The most doubtful are the names of very compounded mixed modes and substances

§20. Mixed modes therefore, that are made up but of a few and obvious simple ideas, have usually names of no very uncertain signification. But the names of *mixed modes*, which comprehend a great number of simple ideas, are commonly of a very doubtful, and undetermined meaning, as has been shown. The names of substances, being annexed to ideas, that are neither the real essences, nor exact representations of the patterns they are referred to, are liable yet to greater imperfection and uncertainty, especially when we come to a philosophical use of them.

Why this imperfection charged upon words

§21. The great disorder that happens in our names of substances, proceeding for the most part from our want of knowledge, and inability to penetrate into their real constitutions, it may probably be wondered, *why I charge this as an imperfection*, rather *upon our words* than understandings. This exception, has so much appearance of justice, that I think myself obliged to give a reason, why I have followed this method. I must confess then, that when I first began this discourse of the understanding, and a good while after, I had not the least thought, that any consideration of words was at all necessary to it. But when having passed over the original and composition of our ideas, I began to examine the extent and certainty of our knowledge, I found it had so near a connexion with words, that unless their force and manner of signification were first well observed, there could be very little said clearly and pertinently concerning knowledge: which being conversant about truth, had constantly to do with propositions. And though it terminated in things, yet it was for the most part so much by the intervention of words, that they seemed scarce separable from our general knowledge. At least they interpose themselves so much between our understandings, and the truth, which it would contemplate and apprehend, that like the *medium* through which visible objects pass, their obscurity and disorder does not seldom cast a mist before our eyes, and impose upon our understandings. If we consider, in the fallacies, men put upon themselves, as well as others, and the mistakes in men's disputes and notions, how great a part is owing to words, and their uncertain or mistaken significations, we shall have reason to think this no small obstacle in the way to knowledge, which, I conclude we are the more carefully to be warned of, because it has been so far from being taken notice of as an inconvenience, that the arts of improving it have been made the business of men's study; and obtained the reputation of learning and subtlety, as we shall see in the following chapter. But I am apt to imagine, that were the imperfections of language, as the instrument of knowledge, more throughly[8] weighed, a great many of the controversies that make such a noise in the world, would of themselves cease; and the way to knowledge, and, perhaps, peace too, lie a great deal opener than it does.

This should teach us moderation, in imposing our own sense of old authors

§22. Sure I am, that the signification of words, in all languages, depending very much on the thoughts, notions, and ideas of him that uses them, must unavoidably be of great uncertainty, to men of the same language and country. This is so evident in the Greek authors, that he, that shall peruse their

writings, will find, in almost every one of them, a distinct language, though the same words. But when to this natural difficulty in every country, there shall be added different countries, and remote ages, wherein the speakers and writers had very different notions, tempers, customs, ornaments, and figures of speech, *etc.* every one of which, influenced the signification of their words then, though to us now they are lost and unknown, *it would become us to be charitable one to another in our interpretations or misunderstanding of* those *ancient writings*, which though of great concernment to us to be understood, are liable to the unavoidable difficulties of speech, which, (if we except the names of simple ideas, and some very obvious things) is not capable, without a constant defining the terms of conveying the sense and intention of the speaker, without any manner of doubt and uncertainty, to the hearer. And in discourses of religion, law, and morality, as they are matters of the highest concernment, so there will be the greatest difficulty.

§23. The volumes of interpreters, and commentators on the Old and New Testament, are but too manifest proofs of this. Though everything said in the text be infallibly true, yet the reader may be, nay cannot choose but be very fallible in the understanding of it. Nor is it to be wondered, that the will of GOD, when clothed in words, should be liable to that doubt and uncertainty, which unavoidably attends that sort of conveyance, when even his Son, whilst clothed in flesh, was subject to all the frailties and inconveniencies of human nature, sin excepted. And we ought to magnify his goodness, that he hath spread before all the world, such legible characters of his works and providence, and given all mankind so sufficient a light of reason, that they to whom this written word never came, could not (whenever they set themselves to search) either doubt of the being of a GOD, or of the obedience due to Him. Since then the precepts of natural religion are plain, and very intelligible to all mankind, and seldom come to be controverted; and other revealed truths, which are conveyed to us by books and languages, are liable to the common and natural obscurities and difficulties incident to words, methinks it would become us to be more careful and diligent in observing the former, and less magisterial, positive, and imperious, in imposing our own sense and interpretations of the latter.

CHAPTER X

Of the Abuse of Words

Abuse of words

§1. Besides the imperfection that is naturally in language, and the obscurity and confusion that is so hard to be avoided in the use of words, there are several *wilful faults and neglects*, which men are guilty of, in this way of communication, whereby they render these signs less clear and distinct in their signification, than naturally they need to be.

First, words without any, or without clear ideas

§2. *First*, in this kind, the first and most palpable abuse is, the using of words, without clear and distinct ideas; or, which is worse, signs without anything signified. Of these there are two sorts:

I. One may observe, in all languages, certain words, that if they be examined, will be found, in their first original, and their appropriated use, not to stand for any clear and distinct ideas. These, for the most part, the several sects of philosophy and religion have introduced. For their authors, or promoters, either affecting something singular, and out of the way of common apprehensions, or to support some strange opinions, or cover some weakness of their hypothesis, seldom fail to *coin* new words, and such as, when they come to be examined, may justly be called *insignificant terms*. For having either had no determinate collection of ideas annexed to them, when they were first invented; or at least such as, if well examined, will be found inconsistent, 'tis no wonder if afterwards, in the vulgar use of the same party, they remain empty sounds, with little or no signification, amongst those who think it enough to have them often in their mouths, as the distinguishing characters of their church, or school, without much troubling their heads to examine, what are the precise ideas they stand for. I shall not need here to heap up instances, everyone's reading and conversation will sufficiently furnish him: Or if he wants to be better stored, the great mint-masters[1] of these kind of terms, I mean the School-men and metaphysicians, (under which, I think, the disputing natural and moral philosophers of these latter ages, may be comprehended,) have wherewithal abundantly to content him.

§3. II. Others there be, who extend this abuse yet further, who take so little care to lay by words, which in their primary notation have scarce any

clear and distinct ideas which they are annexed to, that by an unpardonable negligence, they familiarly *use words*, which the propriety of language has affixed to very important ideas, *without any distinct meaning* at all. *Wisdom*, *glory*, *grace*, etc. are words frequent enough in every man's mouth; but if a great many of those who use them, should be asked, what they mean by them? they would be at a stand, and not know what to answer: a plain proof, that though they have learned those sounds, and have them ready at their tongues' end, yet there are no determined ideas laid up in their minds, which are to be expressed to others by them.

Occasioned by learning names before the ideas they belong to

§4. *Men*, having been *accustomed* from their cradles *to learn words*, which are easily got and retained, *before they knew*, or had framed *the complex ideas*, to which they were annexed, or which were to be found in the things *they* were thought to *stand* for, they *usually continue to do so* all their lives, and without taking the pains necessary to settle in their minds determined ideas, they use their words for such unsteady and confused notions as they have, contenting themselves with the same words other people use; as if their very sound necessarily carried with it constantly the same meaning. This, though men make a shift with, in the ordinary occurrences of life, where they find it necessary to be understood, and therefore they make signs till they are so: yet this insignificancy in their words, when they come to reason concerning either their tenets or interest, manifestly fills their discourse with abundance of empty unintelligible noise and jargon, especially in moral matters, where the words, for the most part, standing for arbitrary and numerous collections of ideas, not regularly and permanently united in nature, their bare sounds are often only thought on, or at least very obscure and uncertain notions annexed to them. Men take the words they find in use amongst their neighbours; and that they may not seem ignorant what they stand for, use them confidently, without much troubling their heads about a certain fixed meaning; whereby, besides the ease of it, they obtain this advantage, that as in such discourses they seldom are in the right, so they are as seldom to be convinced, that they are in the wrong; it being all one to go about to draw those men out of their mistakes, who have no settled notions, as to dispossess a vagrant of his habitation, who has no settled abode. This I guess to be so; and everyone may observe in himself and others, whether it be, or no.

Secondly, unsteady application of them

§5. *Secondly*, another great abuse of words is, *inconstancy* in the use of them. It is hard to find a discourse written of any

subject, especially of controversy, whereon one shall not observe, if he read with attention, the same words (and those commonly the most material in the discourse, and upon which the argument turns) used sometimes for one collection of simple ideas, and sometimes for another, which is a perfect abuse of language, words being intended for signs of my ideas, to make them known to others, not by any natural signification, but by a voluntary imposition, 'tis plain cheat and abuse, when I make them stand sometimes for one thing, and sometimes for another; the wilful doing whereof, can be imputed to nothing but great folly, or greater dishonesty. And a man, in his accounts with another, may, with as much fairness, make the characters of numbers stand sometimes for one, and sometimes for another collection of units: *v.g.* this character 3 stand sometimes for three, sometimes for four, and sometimes for eight; as in his discourse, or reasoning, make the same words stand for different collections of simple ideas. If men should do so in their reckonings, I wonder who would have to do with them? One who would speak thus, in the affairs and business of the world, and call 8 sometimes seven, and sometimes nine, as best served his advantage, would presently have clapped upon him one of the two names men constantly are disgusted with. And yet in arguings, and learned contests, the same sort of proceeding passes commonly for wit and learning: but to me it appears a greater dishonesty, than the misplacing of counters, in the casting up a debt; and the cheat the greater, by how much truth is of greater concernment and value, than money.

Thirdly, affected obscurity by wrong application

§6. *Thirdly*, another abuse of language is, an *affected obscurity*, by either applying old words, to new and unusual significations; or introducing new and ambiguous terms, without defining either; or else putting them so together, as may confound their ordinary meaning. Though the Peripatetic philosophy has been most eminent in this way, yet other sects have not been wholly clear of it. There is scarce any of them that are not cumbered with some difficulties, (such is the imperfection of human knowledge,) which they have been fain to cover with obscurity of terms, and to confound the signification of words, which, like a mist before people's eyes, might hinder their weak parts from being discovered. That *body* and *extension*, in common use, stand for two distinct ideas, is plain to anyone that will but reflect a little. For were their signification precisely the same, it would be proper, and as intelligible to say, the *body of an extension*, as *the extension of a body*; and yet there are those who find it necessary to confound their signification. To this abuse, and the mischiefs of confounding

the signification of words, logic, and the liberal sciences as they have been handled in the Schools, have given reputation; and the admired art of disputing,[2] hath added much to the natural imperfection of languages, whilst it has been made use of, and fitted, to perplex the signification of words, more than to discover the knowledge and truth of things: and he that will look into that sort of learned writings, will find the words there much more obscure, uncertain, and undetermined in their meaning, than they are in ordinary conversation.

Logic and dispute has much contributed to this

§7. This is unavoidably to be so, where men's parts and learning, are estimated by their skill in *disputing*. And if reputation and reward shall attend these conquests, which depend mostly on the fineness and niceties of words, 'tis no wonder if the wit of man so employed, should perplex, involve, and subtilize the signification of sounds, so as never to want something to say, in opposing or defending any question; the victory being adjudged not to him who had truth on his side, but the last word in the dispute.

Calling it subtlety

§8. This, though a very useless skill, and that which I think the direct opposite to the ways of knowledge, hath yet passed hitherto under the laudable and esteemed names of *subtlety* and *acuteness*; and has had the applause of the Schools, and encouragement of one part of the learned men of the world. And no wonder, since the philosophers of old, (the disputing and wrangling philosophers I mean, such as Lucian[3] wittily, and with reason taxes,) and the Schoolmen since, aiming at glory and esteem, for their great and universal knowledge, easier a great deal to be pretended to, than really acquired, found this a good expedient to cover their ignorance, with a curious and unexplicable web of perplexed words, and procure to themselves the admiration of others, by unintelligible terms, the apter to produce wonder, because they could not be understood: whilst it appears in all history, that these profound doctors were no wiser, nor more useful than their neighbours; and brought but small advantage to human life, or the societies, wherein they lived: unless the coining of new words, where they produced no new things to apply them to, or the perplexing or obscuring the signification of old ones, and so bringing all things into question and dispute, were a thing profitable to the life of man, or worthy commendation and reward.

This learning very little benefits society

§9. For, notwithstanding these learned disputants, these all-knowing doctors, it was to the unscholastic statesman, that the governments of the world owed their peace, defence, and liberties; and

from the illiterate and contemned mechanic, (a name of disgrace) that they received the improvements of useful arts. Nevertheless, this artificial ignorance, and *learned gibberish*, prevailed mightily in these last ages, by the interest and artifice of those, who found no easier way to that pitch of authority and dominion they have attained, than by amusing the men of business, and ignorant, with hard words, or employing the ingenious and idle in intricate disputes, about unintelligible terms, and holding them perpetually entangled in that endless labyrinth. Besides, there is no such way to gain admittance, or give defence to strange and absurd doctrines, as to guard them round about with legions of obscure, doubtful, and undefined words. Which yet make these retreats, more like the dens of robbers, or holes of foxes, than the fortresses of fair warriors: which if it be hard to get them out of, it is not for the strength that is in them, but the briars and thorns, and the obscurity of the thickets they are beset with. For untruth being unacceptable to the mind of man, there is no other defence left for absurdity, but obscurity.

But destroys the instruments of knowledge and communication

§10. Thus learned ignorance, and this art of keeping, even inquisitive men, from true knowledge, hath been propagated in the world, and hath much perplexed, whilst it pretended to inform the understanding. For we see, that other well-meaning and wise men, whose education and parts had not acquired that *acuteness*, could intelligibly express themselves to one another; and in its plain use, make a benefit of language. But though unlearned men well enough understood the words *white* and *black*, *etc.* and had constant notions of the ideas signified by those words; yet there were philosophers found, who had learning and *subtlety* enough to prove, that *snow* was *black*[4]; *i.e.* to prove, that *white* was *black*. Whereby they had the advantage to destroy the instruments and means of discourse, conversation, instruction, and society; whilst with great art and *subtlety* they did no more but perplex and confound the signification of words, and thereby render language less useful, than the real defects of it had made it, a gift, which the illiterate had not attained to.

As useful as to confound the sound of the letters

§11. These learned men did equally instruct men's understandings, and profit their lives, as he who should alter the signification of known characters, and, by a subtle device of learning, far surpassing the capacity of the illiterate, dull, and vulgar, should, in his writing, show, that he could put *A* for *B*, and *D* for *E*, *etc.* to the no small admiration and benefit of his reader. It being as senseless to put *black*,

which is a word agreed on to stand for one sensible idea, to put it, I say, for another, or the contrary idea, *i.e.* to call *snow black*, as to put this mark *A.* which is a character agreed on to stand for one modification of sound, made by a certain motion of the organs of speech, for *B.* which is agreed on to stand for another modification of sound, made by another certain motion of the organs of speech.

This art has perplexed religion and justice

§12. Nor hath this mischief stopped in logical niceties, or curious empty speculations; it hath invaded the great concernments of human life and society; obscured and perplexed the material truths of law and divinity; brought confusion, disorder and uncertainty into the affairs of mankind; and if not destroyed, yet in great measure rendered useless, those two great rules, religion and justice. What have the greatest part of the comments and disputes, upon the laws of GOD and man served for, but to make the meaning more doubtful, and perplex the sense? What have been the effect of those multiplied curious distinctions, and acute niceties, but obscurity and uncertainty, leaving the words more unintelligible, and the reader more at a loss? How else comes it to pass, that princes, speaking or writing to their servants, in their ordinary commands, are easily understood; speaking to their people, in their laws, are not so? And, as I remarked before, doth it not often happen, that a man of an ordinary capacity, very well understands a text, or a law, that he reads, till he consults an expositor, or goes to council; who by that time he hath done explaining them, makes the words signify either nothing at all, or what he pleases.

And ought not to pass for learning

§13. Whether any by-interests of these professions have occasioned this, I will not here examine; but I leave it to be considered, whether it would not be well for mankind, whose concernment it is to know things as they are, and to do what they ought; and not to spend their lives in talking about them, or tossing words to and fro; whether it would not be well, I say, that the use of words were made plain and direct; and that language, which was given us for the improvement of knowledge, and bond of society, should not be employed to darken truth, and unsettle people's rights; to raise mists, and render unintelligible both morality and religion? Or that at least, if this will happen, it should not be thought learning or knowledge to do so?

Fourthly, taking them for things

§14. *Fourthly*, another great *abuse of words is, the taking them for things*. This, though it, in some degree, concerns all names in general; yet more particularly affects those of substances. To this abuse,

those men are most subject, who confine their thoughts to any one system, and give themselves up into a firm belief of the perfection of any received hypothesis: whereby they come to be persuaded, that the terms of that sect, are so suited to the nature of things, that they perfectly correspond with their real existence. Who is there, that has been bred up in the Peripatetic philosophy,[5] who does not think the ten names, under which are ranked the ten predicaments,[6] to be exactly conformable to the nature of things? Who is there, of that school, that is not persuaded, that *substantial forms, vegetative souls, abhorrence of a vacuum, intentional species*,[7] etc. are something real? These words men have learned from their very entrance upon knowledge, and have found their masters and systems lay great stress upon them: and therefore they cannot quit the opinion, that they are conformable to nature, and are the representations of something that really exists. The Platonists have their *soul of the world*,[8] and the Epicureans their *endeavour towards motion*[9] in their atoms, when at rest. There is scarce any sect in philosophy has not a distinct set of terms, that others understand not. But yet this gibberish, which in the weakness of human understanding, serves so well to palliate men's ignorance, and cover their errors, comes by familiar use amongst those of the same tribe, to seem the most important part of language, and of all other the terms the most significant: and should *aerial* and *ætherial vehicles*[10] come once, by the prevalency of that doctrine, to be generally received anywhere, no doubt those terms would make impressions on men's minds, so as to establish them in the persuasion of the reality of such things, as much as *peripatetic forms*,[11] and *intentional species* have heretofore done.

§15. How much *names taken for things*, are apt to *mislead the understanding*, the attentive reading of philosophical writers would abundantly discover; and that, perhaps, in words little suspected of any such misuse. I shall instance in one only, and that a very familiar one. How many intricate disputes have there been about *matter*, as if there were some such thing really in nature, distinct from *body*; as 'tis evident, the word *matter* stands for an idea distinct from the idea of body? For if the ideas these two terms stood for, were precisely the same, they might indifferently in all places be put one for another. But we see, that though it be proper to say, there is *one matter of all bodies*, one cannot say, there is *one body of all matters*: we familiarly say, one *body* is bigger than another, but it sounds harsh (and I think is never used) to say, one *matter* is bigger than another. Whence comes this then? *Viz.* from hence, that though *matter* and *body*, be not really distinct, but wherever there is the one, there is the other; yet *matter* and *body*, stand

Instance in matter

for two different conceptions, whereof the one is incomplete, and but a part of the other. For *body* stands for a solid extended figured substance, whereof *matter* is but a partial and more confused conception, it seeming to me to be used for the substance and solidity of body, without taking in its extension and figure: And therefore it is that speaking of *matter*, we speak of it always as one, because in truth, it expressly contains nothing but the idea of a solid substance, which is everywhere the same, everywhere uniform. This being our idea of *matter*, we no more conceive, or speak of different *matters* in the world, than we do of different solidities; though we both conceive, and speak of different bodies, because extension and figure are capable of variation. But since solidity cannot exist without extension, and figure, the taking *matter* to be the name of something really existing under that precision, has no doubt produced those obscure and unintelligible discourses and disputes, which have filled the heads and books of philosophers concerning *materia prima*;[12] which imperfection or abuse, how far it may concern a great many other general terms, I leave to be considered. This, I think, I may at least say, that we should have a great many fewer disputes in the world, if words were taken for what they are, the signs of our ideas only, and not for things themselves. For when we argue about *matter*, or any the like term, we truly argue only about the idea we express by that sound, whether that precise idea agree to anything really existing in nature, or no. And if men would tell, what ideas they make their words stand for, there could not be half that obscurity or wrangling, in the search or support of truth, that there is.

This makes errors lasting

§16. But whatever inconvenience follows from this mistake of words, this I am sure, that by constant and familiar use, they charm men into notions far remote from the truth of things. 'Twould be a hard matter, to persuade anyone, that the words which his father or schoolmaster, the parson of the parish, or such a reverend doctor used, signified nothing that really existed in nature: which, perhaps, is *none of the least causes, that men are so hardly drawn to quit their mistakes*, even in opinions purely philosophical, and where they have no other interest but truth. For the words, they have a long time been used to, remaining firm in their minds, 'tis no wonder, that the wrong notions annexed to them, should not be removed.

Fifthly, setting them for what they cannot signify

§17. *Fifthly*, another *abuse of words, is the setting them in the place of things, which they do or can by no means signify*. We may observe, that in the general names of substances, whereof the nominal essences are only known to us, when we put them into

propositions, and affirm or deny anything about them, we do most commonly tacitly suppose, or intend, they should stand for the real essence of a certain sort of substances. For when a man says 'gold is malleable', he means and would insinuate something more than this, that 'what I call gold is malleable', (though truly it amounts to no more) but would have this understood, *viz.* that 'gold; i.e. what has the real essence of gold is malleable', which amounts to thus much, that 'malleableness depends on, and is inseparable from the real essence of gold'. But a man, not knowing wherein that real essence consists, the connexion in his mind of malleableness, is not truly with an essence he knows not, but only with the sound gold he puts for it. Thus when we say, that *animal rational* is, and *animal implume bipes latis unguibus*,[13] is not a good definition of a man; 'tis plain, we suppose the name *man* in this case to stand for the real essence of a species, and would signify, that a *rational animal* better described that real essence, than *a two-legged animal with broad nails, and without feathers*. For else, why might not Plato as properly make the word ἄνθρωπος[14] or *man* stand for his complex idea, made up of the ideas of a body, distinguished from others by a certain shape and other outward appearances, as Aristotle, make the complex idea, to which he gave the name ἄνθρωπος or *man*, of body, and the faculty of reasoning joined together; unless the name ἄνθρωπος or *man*, were supposed to stand for something else, than what it signifies; and to be put in the place of some other thing, than the idea a man professes he would express by it?

V.g. putting them for the real essences of substances

§18. 'Tis true, the names of substances would be much more useful, and propositions made in them much more certain, were the real essences of substances the ideas in our minds, which those words signified. And 'tis for want of those real essences, that our words convey so little knowledge or certainty in our discourses about them: and therefore the mind, to remove that imperfection as much as it can, makes them, by a secret supposition, to stand for a thing, having that real essence, as if thereby it made some nearer approaches to it. For though the word *man* or *gold*, signify nothing truly but a complex idea of properties, united together in one sort of substances: yet there is scarce anybody in the use of these words, but often supposes each of those names to stand for a thing having the real essence, on which those properties depend. Which is so far from diminishing the imperfection of our words, that by a plain abuse, it adds to it, when we would make them stand for something, which not being in our complex idea, the name we use, can no ways be the sign of.

Hence we think every change of our idea in substances, not to change the species

§19. This shows us the reason, Why in *mixed modes* any of the ideas that make the composition of the complex one, being left out, or changed, it is allowed to be another thing, *i.e.* to be of another species, as is plain in *chance-medly*,[15] *manslaughter*, *murder*, *parricide*, etc. The reason whereof is, because the complex idea signified by that name, is the real, as well as nominal essence; and there is no secret reference of that name to any other essence, but that. But in *substances* it is not so. For though in that called *gold* one puts into his complex idea, what another leaves out; and *vice versâ*: yet men do not usually think, that therefore the species is changed: because they secretly in their minds refer that name, and suppose it annexed to a real immutable essence of a thing existing, on which those properties depend. He that adds to his complex idea of *gold*, that of fixedness or solubility in *aqua regia*,[16] which he put not in it before, is not thought to have changed the species; but only to have a more perfect idea, by adding another simple idea, which is always in fact, joined with those other, of which his former complex idea consisted. But this reference of the name to a thing, whereof we have not the idea, is so far from helping at all, that it only serves the more to involve us in difficulties. For by this tacit reference to the real essence of that species of bodies, the word *gold* (which by standing for a more or less perfect collection of simple ideas, serves to design that sort of body well enough in civil discourse) comes to have no signification at all, being put for somewhat, whereof we have no idea at all, and so can signify nothing at all, when the body itself is away. For however it may be thought all one; yet, if well considered, it will be found a quite different thing, to argue about *gold* in name, and about a parcel of the body itself, *v.g.* a piece of *leaf-gold* laid before us; though in discourse we are fain to substitute the name for the thing.

The cause of the abuse, a supposition of nature's working always regularly

§20. That which, I think very much disposes men to substitute their names for the real essences of species, is the supposition before mentioned, that nature works regularly in the production of things, and sets the boundaries to each of those species, by giving exactly the same real internal constitution to each individual, which we rank under one general name. Whereas anyone who observes their different qualities can hardly doubt, that many of the individuals, called by the same name, are, in their internal constitution, as different one from another, as several of those which are ranked under different specific names. *This supposition*, however *that the same precise internal constitution goes always with the same specific name, makes men forward to take* those

names for the representatives of those real *essences*, though indeed they signify nothing but the complex ideas they have in their minds, when they use them. So that, if I may so say, signifying one thing, and being supposed for, or put in the place of another, they cannot but, in such a kind of use, cause a great deal of uncertainty in men's discourses; especially in those, who have thoroughly imbibed the doctrine of *substantial forms*,[17] whereby they firmly imagine the several species of things to be determined and distinguished.

This abuse contains two false suppositions

§21. But however preposterous and absurd it be, to make our names stand for ideas we have not, or (which is all one) essences that we know not, it being in effect to make our words the signs of nothing; yet 'tis evident to anyone, whoever so little reflects on the use men make of their words, that there is nothing more familiar. When a man asks, whether this or that thing he sees, let it be a drill,[18] or a monstrous *fœtus*, be a *man*, or no; 'tis evident, the question is not, whether that particular thing agree to his complex idea, expressed by the name *man*: but whether it has in it the real essence of a species of things, which he supposes his name *man* to stand for. In which way of using the names of substances, there are these false suppositions contained.

First, that there are certain precise essences, according to which nature makes all particular things, and by which they are distinguished into species. That every thing has a real constitution, whereby it is what it is, and on which its sensible qualities depend, is past doubt: But I think it has been proved, that this makes not the distinction of species, as we rank them; nor the boundaries of their names.

Secondly, this tacitly also insinuates, as if we had ideas of these proposed essences. For to what purpose else is it, to inquire whether this or that thing have the real essence of the species *man*, if we did not suppose that there were such a specific essence known? Which yet is utterly false: and therefore such application of names, as would make them stand for ideas which we have not, must needs cause great disorder in discourses and reasonings about them, and be a great inconvenience in our communication by words.

Sixthly, a supposition that words have a certain and evident signification

§22. *Sixthly*, there remains yet another more general, though, perhaps, less observed *abuse of words*; and that is, that men having by a long and familiar use annexed to them certain ideas, they are apt *to imagine so near and necessary a connexion between the names and the signification* they use them in, that they forwardly suppose one cannot but understand what their meaning is; and therefore

one ought to acquiesce in the words delivered, as if it were past doubt, that in the use of those common received sounds, the speaker and hearer had necessarily the same precise ideas. Whence presuming, that when they have in discourse used any term, they have thereby, as it were, set before others the very thing they talk of. And so likewise taking the words of others, as naturally standing for just what they themselves have been accustomed to apply them to, they never trouble themselves to explain their own, or understand clearly others' meaning. From whence commonly proceeds noise, and wrangling, without improvement of information; whilst men take words to be the constant regular marks of agreed notions, which in truth are no more but the voluntary and unsteady signs of their own ideas. And yet men think it strange, if in discourse, or (where it is often absolutely necessary) in dispute, one sometimes asks the meaning of their terms: though the arguings one may every day observe in conversation, make it evident, that there are few names of complex ideas, which any two men use for the same just precise collection. 'Tis hard to name a word, which will not be a clear instance of this. *Life* is a term, none more familiar. Anyone almost would take it for an affront, to be asked what he meant by it. And yet if it comes in question, whether a plant, that lies ready formed in the seed, have life; whether the embryo in an egg before incubation, or a man in a swoon without sense or motion, be alive, or no? it is easy to perceive, that a clear distinct settled idea does not always accompany the use of so known a word, as that of *life* is. Some gross and confused conceptions men indeed ordinarily have, to which they apply the common words of their language, and such a loose use of their words serves them well enough in their ordinary discourses or affairs. But this is not sufficient for philosophical inquiries. Knowledge and reasoning require precise determinate ideas. And though men will not be so importunately dull, as not to understand what others say, without demanding an explication of their terms; nor so troublesomely critical, as to correct others in the use of the words they receive from them: yet where truth and knowledge are concerned in the case, I know not what fault it can be to desire the explication of words, whose sense seems dubious; or why a man should be ashamed to own his ignorance, in what sense another man uses his words, since he has no other way of certainly knowing it, but by being informed. This abuse of taking words upon trust, has nowhere spread so far, nor with so ill effects, as amongst men of letters. The multiplication and obstinacy of disputes, which has so laid waste the intellectual world, is owing to nothing more, than to this ill use of words.

For though it be generally believed, that there is great diversity of opinions in the volumes and variety of controversies, the world is distracted with; yet the most I can find, that the contending learned men of different parties do, in their arguings one with another, is, that they speak different languages. For I am apt to imagine, that when any of them quitting terms, think upon things, and know what they think, they think all the same: though perhaps, what they would have, be different.

The ends of language, first, to convey our ideas

§23. To conclude this consideration of the imperfection, and abuse of language; the *ends of language in our discourse with others*, being chiefly these three: *first, to make known* one man's thoughts or ideas to another. *Secondly*, to do it *with* as much ease and *quickness*, as is possible; and *thirdly*, thereby *to convey* the *knowledge* of things. Language is either abused, or deficient, when it fails of any of these three.

First, words fail in the first of these ends, and lay not open one man's ideas to another's view. *First*, when men have names in their mouths without any determined ideas in their minds, whereof they are the signs: or *secondly*, when they apply the common received names of any language to ideas, to which the common use of that language does not apply them: or *thirdly*, when they apply them very unsteadily, making them stand now for one, and by and by for another idea.

Secondly, to do it with quickness

§24. *Secondly*, men fail of conveying their thoughts, with all the quickness and ease that may be, when they have complex ideas, without having distinct names for them. This is sometimes the fault of the language itself, which has not in it a sound yet applied to such a signification: and sometimes the fault of the man, who has not yet learned the name for that idea he would show another.

Thirdly, therewith to convey the knowledge of things

§25. *Thirdly*, there is no knowledge of things conveyed by men's words, when their ideas agree not to the reality of things. Though it be a defect, that has its original in our ideas, which are not so conformable to the nature of things, as attention, study, and application might make them: yet it fails not to extend itself to our words too, when we use them as signs of real beings, which yet never had any reality or existence.

How men's words fail in all these

§26. *First*, he that hath words of any language, without distinct ideas in his mind, to which he applies them, does, so far as he uses them in discourse, only make a noise without any sense or signification; and how learned soever he may seem by the use of hard words, or learned terms, is not much more advanced thereby in knowledge,

than he would be in learning, who had nothing in his study but the bare titles of books, without possessing the contents of them. For all such words, however put into discourse, according to the right construction of grammatical rules, or the harmony of well-turned periods, do yet amount to nothing but bare sounds, and nothing else.

§27. *Secondly*, he that has complex ideas, without particular names for them, would be in no better a case than a bookseller, who had in his warehouse volumes, that lay there unbound, and without titles; which he could therefore make known to others, only by showing the loose sheets, and communicate them only by tale. This man is hindered in his discourse, for want of words to communicate his complex ideas, which he is therefore forced to make known by an enumeration of the simple ones that compose them; and so is fain often to use twenty words, to express what another man signifies in one.

§28. *Thirdly*, he that puts not constantly the same sign for the same idea, but uses the same words sometimes in one, and sometimes in another signification, ought to pass in the Schools and conversation, for as fair a man, as he does in the market and exchange,[19] who sells several things under the same name.

§29. *Fourthly*, he that applies the words of any language to ideas, different from those, to which the common use of that country applies them, however his own understanding may be filled with truth and light, will not by such words be able to convey much of it to others, without defining his terms. For however, the sounds are such as are familiarly known, and easily enter the ears of those who are accustomed to them; yet standing for other ideas than those they usually are annexed to, and are wont to excite in the mind of the hearers, they cannot make known the thoughts of him who thus uses them.

§30. *Fifthly*, he that hath imagined to himself substances such as never have been, and filled his head with ideas which have not any correspondence with the real nature of things, to which yet he gives settled and defined names, may fill his discourse, and perhaps, another man's head, with the fantastical imaginations of his own brain; but will be very far from advancing thereby one jot in real and true knowledge.

§31. He that hath names without ideas, wants meaning in his words, and speaks only empty sounds. He that hath complex ideas without names for them, wants liberty and dispatch in his expressions, and is necessitated to use periphrases. He that uses his words loosely and unsteadily, will either

be not minded, or not understood. He that applies his names to ideas, different from their common use, wants propriety in his language, and speaks gibberish. And he that hath ideas of substances, disagreeing with the real existence of things, so far wants the materials of true knowledge in his understanding, and hath, instead thereof, chimeras.

How in substances

§32. In our notions concerning substances we are liable to all the former inconveniencies: *v.g.* 1. He that uses the word *tarantula*,[20] without having any imagination or idea of what it stands for, pronounces a good word; but so long means nothing at all by it. 2. He that, in a new-discovered country, shall see several sorts of animals and vegetables, unknown to him before, may have as true ideas of them, as of a horse, or a stag; but can speak of them only by a description, till he shall either take the names the natives call them by, or give them names himself. 3. He that uses the word *body* sometimes for pure extension, and sometimes for extension and solidity together, will talk very fallaciously. 4. He that gives the name *horse*, to that idea which common usage calls *mule*, talks improperly, and will not be understood. 5. He that thinks the name *centaur* stands for some real being, imposes on himself, and mistakes words for things.

How in modes and relations

§33. In modes and relations generally, we are liable only to the four first of these inconveniencies, (*viz.*) 1. I may have in my memory the names of modes, as *gratitude*, or *charity*, and yet not have any precise ideas annexed in my thoughts to those names. 2. I may have ideas, and not know the names that belong to them; *v.g.* I may have the idea of a man's drinking, till his colour and humour be altered, till his tongue trips, and his eyes look red, and his feet fail him; and yet not know, that it is to be called *drunkenness*. 3. I may have the ideas of virtues or vices, and names also, but apply them amiss: *v.g.* when I apply the name *frugality* to that idea which others call and signify by this sound, *covetousness*. 4. I may use any of those names with inconstancy. 5. But in modes and relations, I cannot have ideas disagreeing to the existence of things: for modes being complex ideas, made by the mind at pleasure; and relation being but my way of considering, or comparing two things together, and so also an idea of my own making, these ideas can scarce be found to disagree with any thing existing; since they are not in the mind, as the copies of things regularly made by nature, nor as properties inseparably flowing from the internal constitution or essence of any substance; but, as it were, patterns lodged in my memory, with names annexed to them, to denominate actions and relations by, as they come to exist. But the mistake is commonly in my giving a wrong name to

my conceptions; and so using words in a different sense from other people, I am not understood, but am thought to have wrong ideas of them, when I give wrong names to them. Only if I put in my ideas of mixed modes or relations, any inconsistent ideas together, I fill my head also with chimeras;[21] since such ideas, if well examined, cannot so much as exist in the mind, much less any real being, be ever denominated from them.

Seventhly, figurative speech also an abuse of language

§34. Since wit and fancy finds easier entertainment in the world, than dry truth and real knowledge, *figurative speeches*, and allusion in language, will hardly be admitted, as *an* imperfection or *abuse* of it. I confess, in discourses, where we seek rather pleasure and delight, than information and improvement, such ornaments as are borrowed from them, can scarce pass for faults. But yet, if we would speak of things as they are, we must allow, that all the art of rhetoric, besides order and clearness, all the artificial and figurative application of words eloquence hath invented, are for nothing else but to insinuate wrong ideas, move the passions, and thereby mislead the judgment; and so indeed are perfect cheat: and therefore however laudable or allowable oratory may render them in harangues and popular addresses, they are certainly, in all discourses that pretend to inform or instruct, wholly to be avoided; and where truth and knowledge are concerned, cannot but be thought a great fault, either of the language or person that makes use of them. What, and how various they are, will be superfluous here to take notice; the books of rhetoric which abound in the world, will instruct those, who want to be informed: only I cannot but observe, how little the preservation and improvement of truth and knowledge, is the care and concern of mankind; since the arts of fallacy are endowed and preferred. 'Tis evident how much men love to deceive, and be deceived, since rhetoric, that powerful instrument of error and deceit, has its established professors, is publicly taught, and has always been had in great reputation: and, I doubt not, but it will be thought great boldness, if not brutality in me to have said thus much against it. *Eloquence*, like the fair sex, has too prevailing beauties in it, to suffer itself ever to be spoken against. And 'tis in vain to find fault with those arts of deceiving, wherein men find pleasure to be deceived.

CHAPTER XI

Of the Remedies of the foregoing Imperfections and Abuses

They are worth seeking

§1. The natural and improved imperfections of language, we have seen above at large: and speech being the great bond that holds society together, and the common conduit, whereby the improvements of knowledge are conveyed from one man, and one generation to another, it would well deserve our most serious thoughts, to consider what *remedies* are to be found *for these inconveniences* above-mentioned.

Are not easy

§2. I am not so vain to think, that anyone can pretend to attempt the perfect *reforming* the *languages* of the world, no not so much as that of his own country, without rendering himself ridiculous. To require that men should use their words constantly in the same sense, and for none but determined and uniform ideas, would be to think, that all men should have the same notions, and should talk of nothing but what they have clear and distinct ideas of. Which is not to be expected by anyone, who hath not vanity enough to imagine he can prevail with men to be very knowing or very silent. And he must be very little skilled in the world, who thinks that a voluble tongue, shall accompany only a good understanding; or that men's talking much or little, shall hold proportion only to their knowledge.

But yet necessary to philosophy

§3. But though the market and exchange must be left to their own ways of talking, and gossipings not be robbed of their ancient privilege: though the Schools, and men of argument would perhaps take it amiss to have anything offered, to abate the length, or lessen the number of their disputes; yet, methinks those, *who* pretend *seriously* to *search after*, or maintain *truth*, should think themselves obliged to study, how they might deliver themselves without obscurity, doubtfulness, or equivocation, to which men's words are naturally liable, if care be not taken.

Misuse of words the cause of great errors

§4. For he that shall well consider the *errors* and obscurity, the mistakes and confusion, that is *spread in the world by an ill use of words*, will find some reason to doubt, whether language, as it has been employed, has contributed more to the improvement or hindrance of knowledge amongst mankind. How many are there, that when they would think on things, fix their thoughts only on words, especially when they would apply their minds to moral matters? And who then can wonder, if

the result of such contemplations and reasonings, about little more than sounds, whilst the ideas they annexed to them, are very confused, or very unsteady, or perhaps none at all; who can wonder, I say, that such thoughts and reasonings, end in nothing but obscurity and mistake, without any clear judgement or knowledge?

Obstinacy §5. This inconvenience, in an ill use of words, men suffer in their own private meditations: but much more manifest are the disorders which follow from it, in conversation, discourse, and arguings with others. For language being the great conduit, whereby men convey their discoveries, reasonings, and knowledge, from one to another, he that makes an ill use of it, though he does not corrupt the fountains of knowledge, which are in things themselves; yet he does, as much as in him lies, break or stop the pipes, whereby it is distributed to the public use and advantage of mankind. He that uses words without any clear and steady meaning, what does he but lead himself and others into errors? And he that designedly does it, ought to be looked on as an enemy to truth and knowledge. And yet, who can wonder, that all the sciences and parts of knowledge, have been so over-charged with obscure and equivocal terms, and insignificant and doubtful expressions, capable to make the most attentive or quick-sighted, very little, or not at all the more knowing or orthodox; since subtlety, in those who make profession to teach or defend truth, hath passed so much for a virtue: a virtue, indeed, which consisting, for the most part, in nothing but the fallacious and illusory use of *obscure* or *deceitful terms*, is only fit to *make men* more *conceited* in their ignorance, and *obstinate* in their errors.

And wrangling §6. Let us look into the books of controversy of any kind, there we shall see, that the effect of obscure, unsteady, or equivocal terms, is nothing but noise and wrangling about sounds, without convincing or bettering a man's understanding. For if the idea be not agreed on, betwixt the speaker and hearer, for which the words stand, the argument is not about things, but names. As often as such a word, whose signification is not ascertained betwixt them, comes in use, their understandings have no other object wherein they agree, but barely the sound, the things, that they think on at that time as expressed by that word, being quite different.

Instance bat and bird §7. Whether a *bat* be a *bird*, or no, is not a question, whether a bat be another thing than indeed it is, or have other qualities than indeed it has, for that would be extremely absurd to doubt of: but the question is, 1. either between those that acknowledged themselves to have but imperfect ideas of one or both of those sorts of things, for which these

names are supposed to stand; and then it is a real inquiry, concerning the nature of a *bird*, or a *bat*, to make their yet imperfect ideas of it more complete, by examining, whether all the simple ideas, to which combined together, they both give the name *bird*, be all to be found in a *bat*: but this is a question only of inquirers, (not disputers,) who neither affirm, nor deny, but examine: or, 2. it is a question between disputants; whereof the one affirms, and the other denies, that a *bat* is a *bird*. And then the question is barely about the signification of one, or both these words; in that they not having both the same complex ideas, to which they give these two names, one holds, and t'other denies, that these two names may be affirmed one of another. Were they agreed in the signification of these two names, it were impossible they should dispute about them. For they would presently and clearly see, (were that adjusted between them,) whether all the simple ideas, of the more general name *bird*, were found in the complex idea of a *bat*, or no; and so there could be no doubt, whether a *bat* were a *bird*, or no. And here I desire it may be considered, and carefully examined, whether the greatest part of the disputes in the world, are not merely verbal, and about the signification of words; and whether if the terms they are made in, were defined, and reduced in their signification (as they must be where they signify anything) to determined collections of the simple ideas they do or should stand for, those disputes would not end of themselves, and immediately vanish. I leave it then to be considered, what the learning of disputation is, and how well they are employed for the advantage of themselves, or others, whose business is only the vain ostentation of sounds; *i.e.* those who spend their lives in disputes and controversies. When I shall see any of those combatants, strip all his terms of ambiguity and obscurity, (which everyone may do in the words he uses himself) I shall think him a champion for knowledge, truth, and peace, and not the slave of vain-glory, ambition, or a party.

First, remedy to use no word without an idea

§8. *To remedy the defects of speech* before-mentioned, to some degree, and to prevent the inconveniences that follow from them, I imagine, the observation of these following rules may be of use, till somebody better able shall judge it worth his while, to think more maturely on this matter, and oblige the world with his thoughts on it.

First, a man should take care *to use no word without a signification*, no name without an idea for which he makes it stand. This rule will not seem altogether needless, to anyone who shall take the pains to recollect how

often he has met with such words; as *instinct*, *sympathy*, and *antipathy*, etc. in the discourse of others, so made use of, as he might easily conclude, that those that used them, had no ideas in their minds to which they applied them; but spoke them only as sounds, which usually served instead of reasons, on the like occasions. Not but that these words, and the like, have very proper significations in which they may be used; but there being no natural connexion between any words, and any ideas, these, and any other, may be learned by rote, and pronounced or writ by men, who have no ideas in their minds, to which they have annexed them, and for which they make them stand; which is necessary they should, if men would speak intelligibly even to themselves alone.

Secondly, to have distinct ideas annexed to them in modes

§9. *Secondly*, 'tis not enough a man *uses* his *words as signs of* some *ideas*, those ideas he annexes them to, if they be *simple*, must be clear and distinct; if *complex*, must be *determinate*, *i.e.* the precise collection of simple ideas settled in the mind, with that sound annexed to it, as the sign of that precise determined collection, and no other. This is very necessary in names of modes, and especially moral words; which having no settled objects in nature, from whence their ideas are taken, as from their original, are apt to be very confused. *Justice* is a word in every man's mouth, but most commonly with a very undetermined loose signification: which will always be so, unless a man has in his mind a distinct comprehension of the component parts, that complex idea consists of; and if it be decompounded, must be able to resolve it still on, till he at last comes to the simple ideas, that make it up: and unless this be done, a man makes an ill use of the word, let it be *justice*, for example, or any other. I do not say, a man needs stand to recollect, and make this analysis at large, every time the word *justice* comes in his way: but this, at least, is necessary, that he have so examined the signification of that name, and settled the idea of all its parts in his mind, that he can do it when he pleases. If one, who makes his complex idea of *justice*, to be such a treatment of the person or goods of another, as is according to law, hath not a clear and distinct idea what *law* is, which makes a part of his complex idea of justice, 'tis plain, his idea of justice itself, will be confused and imperfect. This exactness will, perhaps, be judged very troublesome: and therefore most men will think, they may be excused from settling the complex ideas of mixed modes so precisely in their minds. But yet I must say, till this be done, it must not be wondered, that they have a great deal of obscurity and confusion in their own minds, and a great deal of wrangling in their discourses with others.

§10. In the names of *substances*, for a right use of them, something more is required than barely *determined* ideas: in these *the names must also be conformable to things*, as they exist: but of this, I shall have occasion to speak more at large by and by. This exactness is absolutely necessary in inquiries after philosophical knowledge, and in controversies about truth. And though it would be well too, if it extended itself to common conversation, and the ordinary affairs of life; yet I think that is scarce to be expected. Vulgar notions suit vulgar discourses: and both, though confused enough, yet serve pretty well the market, and the wake. Merchants and lovers, cooks and tailors, have words wherewithal to dispatch their ordinary affairs; and so, I think, might philosophers and disputants too, if they had a mind to understand, and to be clearly understood. *And conformable in substances*

§11. *Thirdly*, 'tis not enough that men have ideas, determined ideas, for which they make these signs stand; but they *must* also take care to *apply their words*, as near as may be, *to such ideas as common use has annexed them to*. For words, especially of languages already framed, being no man's private possession, but the common measure of commerce and communication, 'tis not for anyone, at pleasure, to change the stamp they are current in; nor alter the ideas they are affixed to; or at least when there is a necessity to do so, he is bound to give notice of it. Men's intentions in speaking are, or at least should be, to be understood; which cannot be without frequent explanations, demands, and other the like incommodious interruptions, where men do not follow common use. Propriety of speech, is that which gives our thoughts entrance into other men's minds with the greatest ease and advantage: and therefore deserves some part of our care and study, especially in the names of moral words. The proper signification and use of terms is best to be learned from those, who in their writings and discourses, appear to have had the clearest notions, and applied to them their terms with the exactest choice and fitness. This way of using a man's words, according to the propriety of the language, though it have not always the good fortune to be understood: yet most commonly leaves the blame of it on him, who is so unskilful in the language he speaks, as not to understand it, when made use of, as it ought to be. *Thirdly, propriety*

§12. *Fourthly*. But because common use has not so visibly annexed any signification to words, as to make men know always certainly what they precisely stand for: and because men in the improvement of their knowledge, come to have ideas different from the *Fourthly, to make known their meaning*

vulgar and ordinary received ones, for which they must either make new words, (which men seldom venture to do, for fear of being thought guilty of affectation or novelty,) or else must use old ones, in a new signification. Therefore after the observation of the foregoing rules, it is sometimes necessary for the ascertaining the signification of words, to *declare their meaning*; where either common use has left it uncertain and loose; (as it has in most names of very complex ideas) or where the term, being very material in the discourse, and that upon which it chiefly turns, is liable to any doubtfulness or mistake.

And that three ways

§13. As the ideas, men's words stand for, are of different sorts: so the way of making known the ideas, they stand for, when there is occasion, is also different. For though defining be thought the proper *way, to make known the proper signification of words*; yet there be some words, that will not be defined, as there be others, whose precise meaning cannot be made known, but by definition: and, perhaps, a third, which partake somewhat of both the other, as we shall see in the names of simple ideas, modes, and substances.

First, in simple ideas by synonymous terms or showing

§14. *First*, when a man makes use of the *name* of *any simple idea*, which he perceives is not understood, or is in danger to be mistaken, he is obliged by the laws of ingenuity, and the end of speech, to declare his meaning, and make known what idea he makes it stand for. This, as has been shown, cannot be done by definition: and therefore, when a synonymous word fails to do it, there is but one of these ways left. *First*, sometimes the *naming the subject, wherein that simple idea is* to be found, will make its name be understood by those, who are acquainted with that subject, and know it by that name. So to make a countryman understand what *feuillemorte*[1] colour signifies, it may suffice to tell him, 'tis the colour of withered leaves falling in autumn. *Secondly*, but the only sure way of making known the signification of the name of any simple idea, is *by presenting to his senses that subject, which may produce it in his mind*, and make him actually have the idea, that word stands for.

Secondly, in mixed modes by definition

§15. *Secondly, mixed modes*, especially those belonging to morality, being most of them such combinations of ideas, as the mind puts together of its own choice; and whereof there are not always standing patterns to be found existing, the signification of their names cannot be made known, as those of simple ideas, by any showing: but in recompense thereof, may be perfectly and exactly *defined*. For they being combinations of several ideas, that the mind of man has arbitrarily put together, without

reference to any archetypes, men may, if they please, exactly know the ideas, that go to each compositions, and so both use these words in a certain and undoubted signification, and perfectly declare, when there is occasion, what they stand for. This, if well considered, would lay great blame on those, who make not their discourses about moral things very clear and distinct. For since the precise signification of the names of mixed modes, or which is all one, the real essence of each species, is to be known, they being not of nature's, but man's making, it is a great negligence and perverseness, to discourse of moral things with uncertainty and obscurity, which is more pardonable in treating of natural substances, where doubtful terms are hardly to be avoided, for a quite contrary reason, as we shall see by and by.

Morality capable of demonstration

§16. Upon this ground it is, that I am bold to think, that *morality is capable of demonstration*, as well as mathematics: since the precise real essence of the things moral words stand for, may be perfectly known; and so the congruity, or incongruity of the things themselves, be certainly discovered, in which consists perfect knowledge. Nor let anyone object, that the names of substances are often to be made use of in morality, as well as those of modes, from which will arise obscurity. For as to substances, when concerned in moral discourses, their divers natures are not so much inquired into, as supposed; *v.g.* when we say that 'man is subject to law': we mean nothing by *man*, but a corporeal rational creature: what the real essence or other qualities of that creature are in this case, is no way considered. And therefore, whether a child or changeling[2] be a *man* in a physical sense, may amongst the naturalists be as disputable as it will, it concerns not at all the *moral man*, as I may call him, which is this immoveable unchangeable idea, *a corporeal rational being*. For were there a monkey, or any other creature to be found, that had the use of reason, to such a degree, as to be able to understand general signs, and to deduce consequences about general ideas, he would no doubt be subject to law, and, in that sense, be a *man*, how much soever he differed in shape from others of that name. The names of substances, if they be used in them, as they should, can no more disturb moral, than they do mathematical discourses: where, if the mathematicians speak of a *cube* or *globe* of *gold*, or any other body, he has his clear settled idea, which varies not, though it may, by mistake be applied to a particular body, to which it belongs not.

Definitions can make moral discourses clear

§17. This I have here mentioned by the by, to show of what consequence it is for men, in their names of mixed modes, and consequently, in all their moral discourses, to define their words

when there is occasion: since thereby moral knowledge may be brought, to so great clearness and certainty. And it must be great want of ingenuity, (to say no worse of it) to refuse to do it: since a *definition is the only way, whereby the precise meaning of moral words can be known*; and yet a way, whereby their meaning may be known *certainly*, and without leaving any room for any contest about it. And therefore the negligence or perverseness of mankind, cannot be excused, if their discourses in morality be not much more clear, than those in natural philosophy: since they are about ideas in the mind, which are none of them false or disproportionate; they having no external beings for archetypes which they are referred to, and must correspond with. It is far easier for men to frame in their minds an idea, which shall be the standard to which they will give the name *justice*, with which pattern so made, all actions that agree shall pass under that denomination, than, having seen Aristides,[3] to frame an idea, that shall, in all things, be exactly like him, who is as he is, let men make what idea, they please of him. For the one, they need but know the combination of ideas, that are put together within in their own minds; for the other, they must inquire into the whole nature, and abstruse hidden constitution, and various qualities of a thing existing without them.

And is the only way

§18. Another reason that makes the *defining of mixed modes* so necessary, *especially of moral words*, is what I mentioned a little before, *viz.* that it is *the only way whereby the signification of the most of* them can be known with certainty. For the ideas they stand for, being for the most part such, whose component parts nowhere exist together, but scattered and mingled with others, it is the mind alone that collects them, and gives them the union of one idea: and it is only by words, enumerating the several simple ideas which the mind has united, that we can make known to others, what their names stand for; the assistance of the senses in this case not helping us, by the proposal of sensible objects, to show the ideas, which our names of this kind stand for, as it does often in the names of sensible simple ideas, and also to some degree in those of substances.

Thirdly, in substances, by showing and defining

§19. *Thirdly, for the explaining* the signification of *the names of substances* as they stand for the ideas we have of their distinct species, both the forementioned ways, *viz.* of *showing and defining, are requisite*, in many cases, to be made use of. For there being ordinarily in each sort some leading qualities, to which we suppose the other ideas, which make up our complex idea of that species, annexed, we forwardly give the specific name to that thing, wherein that characteristical mark is found,

which we take to be the most distinguishing idea of that species. These leading or characteristical (as I may so call them) ideas, in the sorts of animals and vegetables, is (as has been before remarked, *Ch.* VI. §29 and *Ch.* IX. §15) mostly figure, and in inanimate bodies colour, and in some both together. Now,

Ideas of the leading qualities of substances, are best got by showing

§20. These *leading sensible qualities* are those, which make *the chief ingredients of our specific ideas*, and consequently the most observable and unvariable part in the definitions of our specific names, as attributed to sorts *of substances* coming under our knowledge. For though the sound *man*, in its own nature, be as apt to signify a complex idea made up of animality and rationality, united in the same subject, as to signify any other combination; yet used as a mark to stand for a sort of creatures we count of our own kind, perhaps the outward shape is as necessary to be taken into our complex idea, signified by the word *man*, as any other we find in it; and therefore why Plato's *animal implume bipes latis unguibus*,[4] should not be as good a definition of the name *man*, standing for that sort of creatures, will not be easy to show: for 'tis the shape, as the leading quality, that seems more to determine that species, than a faculty of reasoning, which appears not at first, and in some never. And if this be not allowed to be so, I do not know how they can be excused from murder, who kill monstrous births, (as we call them,) because of an unordinary shape, without knowing whether they have a rational soul, or no; which can be no more discerned in a well-formed, than ill-shaped infant, as soon as born. And who is it has informed us, that a rational soul can inhabit no tenement, unless it has just such a sort of frontispiece, or can join itself to, and inform no sort of body, but one that is just of such an outward structure.

§21. Now *these leading qualities, are best made known by showing* and can hardly be made known otherwise. For the shape of an *horse*, or *cassowary*, will be but rudely and imperfectly imprinted on the mind by words, the sight of the animals doth it a thousand times better: and the idea of the particular colour of *gold*, is not to be got by any description of it, but only by the frequent exercise of the eyes about it, as is evident; in those who are used to this metal, who will frequently distinguish true from counterfeit, pure from adulterate, by the sight, where others (who have as good eyes, but yet, by use, have not got the precise nice idea of that peculiar yellow) shall not perceive any difference. The like may be said of those other simple ideas, peculiar in their kind to any substance; for which precise ideas, there

are no peculiar names. The particular ringing sound there is in *gold*, distinct from the sound of other bodies, has no particular name annexed to it, no more than the particular yellow, that belongs to that metal.

The ideas of their powers best by definition

§22. But because many of the simple ideas that make up our specific ideas of substances, are powers, which lie not obvious to our senses in the things as they ordinarily appear; therefore, *in* the signification of our *names of substances, some part of the signification will be better made known, by enumerating those simple ideas, than in showing the substance itself.* For he that, to the yellow shining colour of *gold* got by sight, shall, from my enumerating them, have the ideas of great ductility, fusibility, fixedness, and solubility, in *aqua regia*,[5] will have a perfecter idea of *gold*, than he can have by seeing a piece of *gold*, and thereby imprinting in his mind only its obvious qualities. But if the formal constitution of this shining, heavy, ductile thing (from whence all these its properties flow) lay open to our senses, as the formal constitution, or essence of a triangle does, the signification of the word *gold*, might as easily be ascertained, as that of *triangle.*

A reflection on the knowledge of spirits

§23. Hence we may take notice, how much the foundation of all *our knowledge of corporeal things, lies in our senses.* For how spirits, separate from bodies, (whose knowledge and ideas of these things, is certainly much more perfect than ours) know them, we have no notion, no idea at all. The whole extent of our knowledge, or imagination, reaches not beyond our own ideas, limited to our ways of perception. Though yet it be not to be doubted, that spirits of a higher rank than those immersed in flesh, may have as clear ideas of the radical constitution of substances, as we have of a triangle, and so perceive how all their properties and operations flow from thence: but the manner how they come by that knowledge, exceeds our conceptions.

Ideas also of substances must be conformable to things

§24. But though definitions will serve to explain the names of substances, as they stand for our ideas; yet they leave them not without great imperfection, as they stand for things. For our names of substances being not put barely for our ideas, but being made use of ultimately to represent things, and so are put in their place, their signification must agree with the truth of things, as well as with men's ideas. And therefore in substances, we are not always to rest in the ordinary complex idea, commonly received as the signification of that word, but must go a little further, and inquire into the nature and properties of the things themselves, and thereby perfect, as much as we can, our ideas of

their distinct species; or else learn them from such as are used to that sort of things, and are experienced in them. For since 'tis intended their names should stand for such collections of simple ideas, as do really exist in things themselves, as well as for the complex idea in other men's minds, which in their ordinary acceptation they stand for: therefore *to define their names right, natural history*[6] *is to be inquired into*; and their properties are, with care and examination, to be found out. For it is not enough, for the avoiding inconveniencies in discourses and arguings about natural bodies and substantial things, to have learned, from the propriety of the language, the common but confused, or very imperfect idea, to which each word is applied, and to keep them to that idea in our use of them: but we must, by acquainting ourselves with the history of that sort of things rectify and settle our complex idea, belonging to each specific name; and in discourse with others, (if we find them mistake us) we ought to tell, what the complex idea is, that we make such a name stand for. This is the more necessary to be done by all those, who search after knowledge, and philosophical verity, in that children being taught words whilst they have but imperfect notions of things, apply them at random, and without much thinking, and seldom frame determined ideas to be signified by them. Which custom, (it being easy, and serving well enough for the ordinary affairs of life and conversation) they are apt to continue, when they are men: and so begin at the wrong end, learning words first, and perfectly, but make the notions to which they apply those words afterwards, very overtly. By this means it comes to pass, that men speaking the proper language of their country, *i.e.* according to grammar-rules of that language, do yet speak very improperly of things themselves; and by their arguing one with another, make but small progress in the discoveries of useful truths, and the knowledge of things, as they are to be found in themselves, and not in our imaginations; and it matters not much, for the improvement of our knowledge, how they are called.

Not easy to be made so

§25. It were therefore to be wished, that men, versed in physical inquiries, and acquainted with the several sorts of natural bodies, would set down those simple ideas, wherein they observe the individuals of each sort constantly to agree. This would remedy a great deal of that confusion, which comes from several persons, applying the same name to a collection of a smaller, or greater number of sensible qualities, proportionably as they have been more or less acquainted with, or accurate in examining the qualities of any sorts of things, which come under one denomination. But a dictionary of this sort, containing, as it were, a natural

history, requires too many hands, as well as too much time, cost, pains, and sagacity, ever to be hoped for; and till that be done, we must content ourselves with such definitions of the names of substances, as explain the sense men use them in. And 'twould be well, where there is occasion, if they would afford us so much. This yet is not usually done; but men talk to one another, and dispute in words, whose meaning is not agreed between them, out of a mistake, that the signification of common words, are certainly established, and the precise ideas, they stand for, perfectly known; and that it is a shame to be ignorant of them. Both which suppositions are false: no names of complex ideas having so settled determined significations, that they are constantly used for the same precise ideas. Nor is it a shame for a man not to have a certain knowledge of anything, but by the necessary ways of attaining it; and so it is no discredit not to know, what precise idea any sound stands for in another man's mind, without he declare it to me, by some other way than barely using that sound, there being no other way, without such a declaration, certainly to know it. Indeed, the necessity of communication by language, brings men to an agreement in the signification of common words, within some tolerable latitude, that may serve for ordinary conversation: and so a man cannot be supposed wholly ignorant of the ideas, which are annexed to words by common use, in a language familiar to him. But common use, being but a very uncertain rule, which reduces itself at last to the ideas of particular men, proves often but a very variable standard. But though such a dictionary, as I have above-mentioned, will require too much time, cost and pains, to be hoped for in this age; yet, methinks, it is not unreasonable to propose, that words standing for things, which are known and distinguished by their outward shapes, should be expressed by little draughts and prints made of them. A vocabulary made after this fashion, would, perhaps with more ease, and in less time, teach the true signification of many terms, especially in languages of remote countries or ages, and settle truer ideas in men's minds of several things, whereof we read the names in ancient authors, than all the large and laborious comments of learned critics. Naturalists, that treat of plants and animals, have found the benefit of this way: and he that has had occasion to consult them, will have reason to confess, that he has a clear idea of *apium*, or *ibex*[7] from a little print of that herb, or beast, than he could have from a long definition of the names of either of them. And so, no doubt, he would have of *strigil* and *sistrum*, if instead of a *curry-comb*, and *cymbal*, which are the English names dictionaries render them by, he could see

stamped in the margin, small pictures of these instruments, as they were in use amongst the ancients. *Toga*, *tunica*, *pallium*, are words easily translated by *gown*, *coat*, and *cloak*: but we have thereby no more true ideas of the fashion of those habits amongst the Romans, than we have of the faces of the tailors who made them. Such things as these, which the eye distinguishes by their shapes, would be best let into the mind by draughts made of them, and more determine the signification of such words, than any other words set for them, or made use of to define them. But this only by the by.

Fifthly, by constancy in their signification

§26. *Fifthly*, if men will not be at the pains to declare the meaning of their words, and definitions of their terms are not to be had; yet this is the least can be expected, that in all discourses, wherein one man pretends to instruct or convince another, he should *use the same word constantly in the same sense*: if this were done, (which nobody can refuse, without great disingenuity) many of the books extant might be spared; many of the controversies in dispute would be at an end; several of those great volumes, swollen with ambiguous words, now used in one sense, and by and by in another, would shrink into a very narrow compass; and many of the philosophers' (to mention no other,) as well as poets' works, might be contained in a nutshell.

When the variation is to be explained

§27. But after all, the provision of words is so scanty in respect of that infinite variety of thoughts, that men, wanting terms to suit their precise notion, will, notwithstanding their utmost caution, be forced often to use the same word, in somewhat different senses. And though in the continuation of a discourse, or the pursuit of an argument, there be hardly room to digress into a particular definition, as often as a man varies the signification of any term; yet the import of the discourse will, for the most part, if there be no designed fallacy, sufficiently lead candid and intelligent readers, into the true meaning of it: but where that is not sufficient to guide the reader, there it concerns the writer to explain his meaning, and show in what sense he there uses that term.