

JOHN LOCKE

AN ESSAY
CONCERNING HUMAN
UNDERSTANDING

EDITED WITH
AN INTRODUCTION, CRITICAL APPARATUS
AND GLOSSARY BY

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§ 10. But whether the Soul be supposed to exist antecedent to, or coeval with, or some time after the first Rudiments of Organisation, or the beginnings of Life in the Body, I leave to be disputed by those, who have better thought of that matter. I confess my self, to have one of those dull Souls, that doth not perceive it self always to contemplate *Ideas*, nor can conceive it any more necessary for the *Soul always to think*, than for the Body always to move; the perception of *Ideas* being (as I conceive) to the Soul, what motion is to the Body, not its Essence, but one of its Operations: And therefore, though thinking be supposed never so much the proper Action of the Soul; yet it is not necessary, to suppose, that it should be always thinking, always in Action. That, perhaps, is the Privilege of the infinite Author and Preserver of things, *who never slumbers nor sleeps*;* but is not competent to any finite Being, at least not to the Soul of Man. We know certainly by Experience, that we sometimes think,

[...] § 10. *The Soul thinks not always; for this wants Proofs.*

and thence draw this infallible Consequence, That there is something in us, that has a Power to think: But whether that Substance perpetually thinks, or no, we can be no farther assured, than Experience informs us For to say, that actual thinking is essential to the Soul, and inseparable from it, is to beg, what is in Question, and not to prove it by Reason; which is necessary to be done, if it be not a self-evident Proposition. But whether this, *That the Soul always thinks*, be a self-evident Proposition, that every Body assents to at first hearing, I appeal to Mankind. 'Tis doubted whether I thought all last night, or no; the Question being about a matter of fact, 'tis begging it, to bring, as a proof for it, an Hypothesis, which is the very thing in dispute: by which way one may prove any thing, and 'tis but supposing that all watches, whilst the balance beats, think, and 'tis sufficiently proved, and past doubt, that my watch thought all last night. But he, that would not deceive himself, ought to build his Hypothesis on matter of fact, and make it out by sensible experience, and not presume on matter of fact, because of his Hypothesis, that is, because he supposes it to be so: which way of proving, amounts to this, That I must necessarily think all last night, because another supposes I always think, though I my self cannot perceive, that I always do so.

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

§ 11. I grant that the Soul in a waking Man is never without thought, because it is the condition of being awake: But whether

§ 11. *It is not always conscious of it.*

sleeping without dreaming be not an Affection of the whole Man, Mind as well as Body, may be worth a waking Man's Consideration; it being hard to conceive, that any thing should think, and not be conscious of it. If the *Soul* doth *think in a sleeping Man*, without being conscious of it, I ask, whether, during such thinking, it has any Pleasure or Pain, or be capable of Happiness or Misery? I am sure the Man is not, no more than the Bed or Earth he lies on. For to be happy or miserable without being conscious of it, seems to me utterly inconsistent and impossible. Or if it be possible, that the Soul can, whilst the Body is sleeping, have its Thinking, Enjoyments, and Concerns, its Pleasure or Pain apart, which the Man is not conscious of, nor partakes in: It is certain, that *Socrates* asleep, and *Socrates* awake, is not the same Person; but his Soul when he sleeps, and *Socrates* the Man consisting of Body and Soul when he is waking, are two Persons: Since waking *Socrates*, has no Knowledge of, or Concernment for that Happiness, or Misery of his Soul, which it enjoys alone by it self whilst he sleeps, without perceiving any thing of it; no more than he has for the Happiness, or Misery of a Man in the *Indies*, whom he knows not. For if we take wholly away all Consciousness of our Actions and Sensations, especially of Pleasure and Pain, and the concernment that accompanies it, it will be hard to know wherein to place personal Identity.

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§ 19. To suppose the Soul to think, and the Man not to perceive it, is, as has been said, to make two Persons in one Man: And if one considers well these Men's way of speaking, one should be led into a suspicion, that they do so. For they who tell us, that the Soul always thinks, do never, that I remember, say, That a Man always thinks. Can the Soul think, and not the Man? Or a Man think, and not be conscious of it? This, perhaps, would be suspected of *Jargon* in others. If they say, The Man thinks always, but is not always conscious of it; they may as well say, His Body is extended, without having parts. For 'tis altogether as intelligible to say, that a body is extended without parts, as that any thing *thinks without being conscious of it*, or perceiving, that it does so. They who talk thus, may, with as much reason, if it be necessary to their Hypothesis, say, That a Man is always hungry, but that he does not always feel it: Whereas hunger consists in that very sensation, as thinking consists in being conscious that one thinks. If they say, That a Man is always conscious to himself of thinking; I ask, How they know it? Consciousness is the perception of what passes in a Man's own mind. Can another Man perceive, that I am conscious of any thing, when I perceive it not my self? No Man's Knowledge here, can go beyond his Experience. Wake a Man out of a sound sleep, and ask him, What he was that moment thinking on. If he himself be conscious of nothing he then thought on, he must be a notable Diviner of Thoughts, that can assure him, that he was thinking: May he not with more reason assure him, he was not asleep? This is something beyond Philosophy; and it cannot be less than Revelation, that discovers to another, Thoughts in my mind, when I can find none there my self: And they must needs have a penetrating sight, who can certainly see, that I think, when I cannot perceive

§ 19. *That a Man should be busie in thinking, and yet not retain in the next moment, very improbable.*

it my self, and when I declare, that I do not; and yet can see, that Dogs or Elephants do not think, when they give all the demonstration of it imaginable, except only telling us, that they do so. This some may suspect to be a step beyond the *Rosecrucians*; it seeming easier to make ones self invisible to others, than to make another's thoughts visible to me, which are not visible to himself. But 'tis but defining the Soul to be a substance, that always thinks, and the business is done. If such a definition be of any Authority, I know not what it can serve for, but to make many Men suspect, That they have no Souls at all, since they find a good part of their Lives pass away without thinking. For no Definitions, that I know, no Suppositions of any Sect, are of force enough to destroy constant Experience; and, perhaps, 'tis the affectation of knowing beyond what we perceive, that makes so much useless dispute, and noise, in the World.

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CHAPTER XXVII
Of Identity and Diversity

§ 1. ANOTHER occasion, the mind often takes of comparing, is the very Being of things, when considering any thing as existing at any determin'd time and place, we compare it with it self existing at another time, and thereon form the *Ideas* of *Identity* and *Diversity*. When we see any thing to be in any place in any instant of time, we are sure, (be it what it will) that it is that very thing, and not another, which at that same time exists in another place, how like and undistinguishable soever it may be in all other respects: And in this consists *Identity*, when the *Ideas* it is attributed to vary not at all from what they were that moment, wherein we consider their former existence, and to which we compare the present. For we never finding, nor conceiving it possible, that two things of the same kind should exist in the same place at the same time, we rightly conclude, that whatever exists any where at any time, excludes all of the same kind, and is there it self alone. When therefore we demand, whether any thing be the same or no, it refers always to something that existed such a time in such a place, which 'twas certain, at that instant, was the same with it self and no other: From whence it follows, that one thing cannot have two beginnings of Existence, nor two things one beginning, it being impossible for two things of the same kind, to be or exist in the same instant, in the very same place; or one and the same thing in different places. That therefore that had one beginning is the same thing, and that which had a different beginning in time and place from that, is not the same but divers. That which has made the Difficulty about this Relation, has been the little care and attention used in having precise Notions of the things to which it is attributed.

§ 1. *Wherein Identity consists.*

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§ 6. This also shews wherein the Identity of the same *Man* consists; *viz.* in nothing but a participation of the same continued Life,

§ 5. *Identity of Animals.* § 6. *Identity of Man.*

by constantly fleeting Particles of Matter, in succession vitally united to the same organized Body. He that shall place the *Identity* of Man in any thing else, but like that of other Animals in one fitly organized Body taken in any one instant, and from thence continued under one Organization of Life in several successively fleeting Particles of Matter, united to it, will find it hard, to make an *Embryo*, one of Years, mad, and sober, the same Man, by any Supposition, that will not make it possible for *Seth*, *Ismael*, *Socrates*, *Pilate*, *St. Austin*, and *Caesar Borgia* to be the same Man. For if the *Identity* of Soul alone makes the same Man, and there be nothing in the Nature of Matter, why the same individual Spirit may not be united to different Bodies, it will be possible, that those Men, living in distant Ages, and of different Tempers, may have been the same Man: Which way of speaking must be from a very strange use of the Word *Man*, applied to an *Idea*, out of which Body and Shape is excluded: And that way of speaking would agree yet worse with the Notions of those Philosophers, who allow of Transmigration, and are of Opinion that the Souls of Men may, for their Miscarriages, be detrued into the Bodies of Beasts, as fit Habitations with Organs suited to the satisfaction of their Brutal Inclinations. But yet I think no body, could he be sure that the Soul of *Heliogabalus* were in one of his Hogs, would yet say that Hog were a *Man* or *Heliogabalus*.

§ 7. 'Tis not therefore Unity of Substance that comprehends all sorts of *Identity*, or will determine it in every Case: But to conceive, and judge of it aright, we must consider what *Idea* the Word it is applied to stands for: It being one thing to be the same *Substance*, another the same *Man*, and a third the same *Person*, if *Person*, *Man*, and *Substance*, are three Names standing for three different *Ideas*; for such as is the *Idea* belonging to that Name, such must be the *Identity*: Which if it had been a little more carefully attended to, would possibly have prevented a great deal of that Confusion, which often occurs about this Matter, with no small seeming Difficulties; especially concerning *Personal Identity*, which therefore we shall in the next place a little consider.

§ 8. An Animal is a living organized Body; and consequently, the same Animal, as we have observed, is the same continued Life

§ 7. *Identity suited to the Idea.* § 8. *Same Man.*

communicated to different Particles of Matter, as they happen successively to be united to that organiz'd living Body. And whatever is talked of other definitions, ingenuous observation puts it past doubt, that the *Idea* in our Minds, of which the *Sound Man* in our Mouths is the Sign, is nothing else but of an Animal of such a certain Form: Since I think I may be confident, that whoever should see a Creature of his own Shape and Make, though it had no more reason all its Life, than a *Cat* or a *Parrot*, would call him still a *Man*; or whoever should hear a *Cat* or a *Parrot* discourse, reason, and philosophize, would call or think it nothing but a *Cat* or a *Parrot*; and say, the one was a dull irrational *Man*, and the other a very intelligent rational *Parrot*. A Relation we have in an Author of great note is sufficient to countenance the supposition of a rational *Parrot*. His Words (α) are,

“I had a mind to know from *Prince Maurice's* own Mouth, the account of a common, but much credited Story, that I had heard so often from many others, of an old *Parrot* he had in *Brasil*, during his Government there, that spoke, and asked, and answered common Questions like a reasonable Creature; so that those of his Train there, generally concluded it to be Witchery or Possession; and one of his Chaplains, who lived long afterwards in *Holland*, would never from that time endure a *Parrot*, but said, they all had a Devil in them. I had heard many particulars of this Story, and assevered by People hard to be discredited, which made me ask *Prince Maurice* what there was of it. He said, with his usual plainness, and dryness in talk, there was something true, but a great deal false, of what had been reported. I desired to know of him, what there was of the first; he told me short and coldly, that he had heard of such an old *Parrot* when he came to *Brasil*, and though he believed nothing of it, and 'twas a good way off, yet he had so much Curiosity as to send for it, that 'twas a very great and a very old one; and when it came first into the Room where the Prince was, with a great many *Dutch-men* about him, it said presently, *What a company of white Men are here?* They asked it what he thought that Man was, pointing at the Prince? It answered, *Some General or other*; when they brought it

(α) *Memoires of what past in Christendom from 1672. to 1679.* p. 57/392.

close to him, he asked it, *D'ou venes vous?* it answered, *De Marinnan*. The Prince, *A qui estes vous?* The Parrot, *A un Portugais*. Prince, *Que fais tu la?* Parrot, *Je garde les pouilles*. The Prince laughed and said, *Vous gardez les pouilles?* The Parrot answered, *Ouy, moy et je scay bien faire*; and made the Chuck four or five times that People use to make to Chickens when they call them. † I set down the Words of this worthy Dialogue in *French*, just as Prince *Maurice* said them to me. I asked him in what Language the *Parrot* spoke, and he said, in *Brasilian*; I asked whether he understood *Brasilian*; he said No, but he had taken care to have two Interpreters by him, the one a *Dutch-man*, that spoke *Brasilian*, and the other a *Brasilian*, that spoke *Dutch*; that he asked them separately and privately, and both of them agreed in telling him just the same thing that the *Parrot* said. I could not but tell this odd Story, because it is so much out of the way, and from the first hand, and what may pass for a good one; for I dare say this Prince, at least, believed himself in all he told me, having ever passed for a very honest and pious Man; I leave it to Naturalists to reason, and to other Men to believe as they please upon it; however, it is not, perhaps, amiss to relieve or enliven a busie Scene sometimes with such digressions, whether to the purpose or no.”

I have taken care that the Reader should have the Story at large in the Authors own Words, because he seems to me not to have thought it incredible; for it cannot be imagined that so able a Man as he, who had sufficiency enough to warrant all the Testimonies he gives of himself, should take so much pains, in a place where it had nothing to do, to pin so close, not only on a Man whom he mentions as his Friend, but on a Prince in whom he acknowledges very great Honesty and Piety, a Story which if he himself thought incredible, he could not but also think ridiculous. The Prince, ‘tis plain, who vouches this Story, and our Author who relates it from him, both of them call this Talker a *Parrot*; and I ask any one else who thinks such a Story fit to be told, whether if this *Parrot*, and all of its kind, had always talked as we have a Princes word for it, this one did,

† *Whence come ye? It answered, From Marinnan. The Prince, To whom do you belong? The Parrot, To a Portugeze. Prince, What do you there? Parrot, I look after the Chickens. The Prince laughed and said, You look after the Chickens? The Parrot answered, Yes I, and I know well enough how to do it.*

whether, I say, they would not have passed for a race of *rational Animals*, but yet whether for all that, they would have been allowed to be Men and not *Parrots*? For I presume 'tis not the *Idea* of a thinking or rational Being alone, that makes the *Idea* of a *Man* in most Peoples Sense; but of a Body so and so shaped joined to it; and if that be the *Idea* of a *Man*, the same successive Body not shifted all at once, must as well as the same immaterial Spirit go to the making of the same *Man*.

§ 9. This being premised to find wherein *personal Identity* consists, we must consider what *Person* stands for; which, I think, is a thinking intelligent Being, that has reason and reflection, and can consider it self as it self, the same thinking thing in different times and places; which it does only by that consciousness, which is inseparable from thinking, and as it seems to me essential to it: It being impossible for any one to perceive, without perceiving, that he does perceive. When we see, hear, smell, taste, feel, meditate, or will any thing, we know that we do so. Thus it is always as to our present Sensations and Perceptions: And by this every one is to himself, that which he calls *self* It not being considered in this case, whether the same *self* be continued in the same, or divers Substances. For since consciousness always accompanies thinking, and 'tis that, that makes every one to be, what he calls *self*; and thereby distinguishes himself from all other thinking things, in this alone consists *personal Identity*, *i.e.* the sameness of a rational Being: And as far as this consciousness can be extended backwards to any past Action or Thought, so far reaches the Identity of that *Person*; it is the same *self* now it was then; and 'tis by the same self with this present one that now reflects on it, that that Action was done.

§ 10. But it is farther enquir'd whether it be the same Identical Substance. This few would think they had reason to doubt of, if these Perceptions, with their consciousness, always remain'd present in the Mind, whereby the same thinking thing would be always consciously present, and, as would be thought, evidently the same to it self. But that which seems to make the difficulty is this, that this consciousness, being interrupted always by forgetfulness, there being no moment of our Lives wherein we have the

§ 9. *Personal Identity.* § 10. *Consciousness makes Personal Identity.*

whole train of all our past Actions before our Eyes in one view: But even the best Memories losing the sight of one part whilst they are viewing another; and we sometimes, and that the greatest part of our Lives, not reflecting on our past selves, being intent on our present Thoughts, and in sound sleep, having no Thoughts at all, or at least none with that consciousness, which remarks our waking Thoughts. I say, in all these cases, our consciousness being interrupted, and we losing the sight of our past *selves*, doubts are raised whether we are the same thinking thing; *i.e.* the same substance or no. Which however reasonable, or unreasonable, concerns not *personal Identity* at all. The Question being what makes the same *Person*, and not whether it be the same Identical Substance, which always thinks in the same *Person*, which in this case matters not at all. Different Substances, by the same consciousness (where they do partake in it) being united into one *Person*; as well as different Bodies, by the same Life are united into one Animal, whose *Identity* is preserved, in that change of Substances, by the unity of one continued Life. For it being the same consciousness that makes a Man be himself to himself, *personal Identity* depends on that only, whether it be annexed only to one individual Substance, or can be continued in a succession of several Substances. For as far as any intelligent Being can repeat the *Idea* of any past Action with the same consciousness it had of it at first, and with the same consciousness it has of any present Action; so far it is the same *personal self*. For it is by the consciousness it has of its present Thoughts and Actions, that it is *self* to it *self* now, and so will be the same *self* as far as the same consciousness can extend to Actions past or to come; and would be by distance of Time, or change of Substance, no more two *Persons* than a Man be two Men, by wearing other Cloaths to Day than he did Yesterday, with a long or short sleep between: The same consciousness uniting those distant Actions into the same *Person*, whatever Substances contributed to their Production.

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§ 15. And thus we may be able without any difficulty to conceive, the same Person at the Resurrection, though in a Body not exactly in make or parts the same which he had here, the same consciousness going along with the Soul that inhabits it. But yet the Soul alone in the change of Bodies, would scarce to any one, but to him that makes the Soul the *Man*, be enough to make the same *Man*. For should the Soul of a Prince, carrying with it the consciousness of the Prince's past Life, enter and inform the Body of a Cobler as soon as deserted by his own Soul, every one sees, he would be the same Person with the Prince, accountable only for the Prince's Actions: But who would say it was the same Man? The Body too goes to the making the Man, and would, I guess, to every Body determine the Man in this case, wherein the Soul, with all its Princely Thoughts about it, would not make another Man: But he would be the same Cobler to every one besides himself. I know that in the ordinary way of speaking, the same Person, and the same Man, stand for one and the same thing. And indeed every one will always have a liberty to speak, as he pleases, and to apply what articulate Sounds to what *Ideas* he thinks fit, and change them as often as he pleases. But yet when we will enquire, what makes the same *Spirit*, *Man*, or *Person*, we must fix the *Ideas* of *Spirit*, *Man*, or *Person*, in our Minds; and having resolved with our selves what we mean by them, it will not be hard to determine, in either of them, or the like, when it is the *same*, and when not.

§ 16. But though the same immaterial Substance, or Soul does not alone, where-ever it be, and in whatsoever State, make the same Man; yet 'tis plain consciousness, as far as ever it can be extended, should it be to Ages past, unites Existences, and Actions, very remote in time, into the same Person, as well as it does the Existence and Actions of the immediately preceding moment: So that whatever has the consciousness of present and past Actions, is the same Person to whom they both belong. Had I the same consciousness,

§ 16. *Consciousness makes the same Person.*

that I saw the Ark and *Noah's* Flood, as that I saw an overflowing of the *Thames* last Winter, or as that I write now, I could no more doubt that I, that write this now, that saw the *Thames* overflow'd last Winter, and that view'd the Flood at the general Deluge, was the same *self*, place that *self* in what Substance you please, than that I that write this am the same *my self* now whilst I write (whether I consist of all the same Substance, material or immaterial, or no) that I was Yesterday. For as to this point of being the same *self*, it matters not whether this present *self* be made up of the same or other Substances, I being as much concern'd, and as justly accountable for any Action was done a thousand Years since, appropriated to me now by this self-consciousness, as I am, for what I did the last moment.

§ 17. *Self* is that conscious thinking thing, (whatever Substance, made up of whether Spiritual, or Material, Simple, or Compounded, it matters not) which is sensible, or conscious of Pleasure and Pain, capable of Happiness or Misery, and so is concern'd for it *self*, as far as that consciousness extends. Thus every one finds, that whilst comprehended under that consciousness, the little Finger is as much a part of it *self*, as what is most so. Upon separation of this little Finger, should this consciousness go along with the little Finger, and leave the rest of the Body, 'tis evident the little Finger would be the *Person*, the *same Person*; and *self* then would have nothing to do with the rest of the Body. As in this case it is the consciousness that goes along with the Substance, when one part is separated from another, which makes the same *Person*, and constitutes this inseparable *self*: so it is in reference to Substances remote in time. That with which the *consciousness* of this present thinking thing can join it self, makes the same *Person*, and is one *self* with it, and with nothing else; and so attributes to it *self*, and owns all the Actions of that thing, as its own, as far as that consciousness reaches, and no farther; as every one who reflects will perceive.

§ 18. In this *personal Identity* is founded all the Right and Justice of Reward and Punishment; Happiness and Misery, being that, for

§ 17. *Self depends on Consciousness.* §§ 18-20. *Object of Reward and Punishment.*

which every one is concerned for *himself*, not mattering what becomes of any Substance, not joined to, or affected with that consciousness. For as it is evident in the instance I gave but now, if the consciousness went along with the little Finger, when it was cut off, that would be the same self which was concerned for the whole Body Yesterday, as making a part of it *self*, whose Actions then it cannot but admit as its own now. Though if the same Body should still live, and immediately from the separation of the little Finger have its own peculiar consciousness, whereof the little Finger knew nothing, it would not at all be concerned for it, as a part of it *self*, or could own any of its Actions, or have any of them imputed to him. [...]