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George Berkeley's Manuscript Introduction

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Kenneth L. Pearce
December 22, 2016

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Ollamh Cúnta Ussher le Léann Berkeley
(An Nua-Fhealsúnacht Mhoch)

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Philosophy being nothing else but the Study of Wisdom & Truth, it may seem Strange, that they who have spent much time & pains in it, do usually find themselves embarrass'd with more Doubts & Difficulties, than they were before they came to that Study. There is nothing these Men can [touch] with their Hands or behold with their Eyes but has its dark Sides. Something they imagine to be in every drop of Water, every grain of Sand which can puzzle & confound the most clear & [elevated] Understanding, & are often by their Principles led into a necessity of admitting the most irreconcilable opinions for true, or (which is worse) of sitting down in a forlorn Scepticism.

The cause of this is thought to be the Obscurity of Things together with the natural Weakness & Imperfection of our Understandings. It is said the Senses we have are few, & those designed by Nature only for the Support of Life & not to penetrate into the Constitution & inward Ground of Things. Besides, the Mind of Man being finite when it treats of things which partake of Infinity, it is not to be wonder'd at if it run into ~~Difficulties~~ & Contradictions, out of which it is impossible it should ever extricate it self, it being of the Nature of Infinite not to be comprehended by that which is finite.

Ou.15 08

But I cannot think our Faculties are so weak & inadequate in respect of Things, as those Men would make us believe. I cannot be brought to Suppose, that right Deductions from true Principles should ever end in Inconsequence, which cannot be maintained or made consistent. We should believe that God has dealt more bountifully with the Sons of Men, than to give them a strong Desire for that which he had placed quite out of their Reach, & so made it impossible for them to obtain. Surely our wise & good Creator would never have made us so eager in the Search of Truth, merely to baulk & perplex us, to make us blame our Faculties, & bewail our inevitable Ignorance.

This

and lead the Mind into a clear view of Truth.

~~Dr Sigourney~~

This was not agreeable to the wonted indulgent methods of Provi-
dence, which whatever appetites it may have implanted in the Crea-
tures, doth usually furnish them with Such Means as, if rightly made
use of will not fail to Satisfy them. Upon the whole my opinion
is, that the far greatest part, if not all, of those Difficultys which
have hitherto amus'd Philosophers, & block'd up the way to Know-
lege are entirely owing to Themselves. That they have first
rais'd a Dust, & then Complain they cannot See.

My Purpose therefore is, to ~~endeavour to~~ discover ~~& prosecute~~,
what ~~those~~ Principles are which have introduc'd all that Doubt-
fulness, & Uncertainty, those Absurdity, & Contradictions into the
Several Sects of Philosophy, insomuch that they wisest Men
have thought our Ignorance incurable, conceiving it to arise
from the natural Dulness & Limitation of our Faculties. And
at the same time, to Substitute Such Principles in their Stead, as
17 shall be free from the like Consequences. And Surely if it is a
work well deserving our pains, to try to extend the Limits
of our Knowlege, & ~~beat down those Mounds & Barriers that~~
~~do right to have been put to~~ Human Understanding, by making it to ap-
pear that those Lets & Difficultys which stay & embarrass the
Mind in its enquiry after Truth, do not Spring from any Dark-
ness & Intricacy in the Objects, or ~~unnatural~~ Defect in the Intellec-
tual Powers, so much as from false Principles which have been
instilled on, & might have been avoided.

How difficult & discouraging soever this Attempt may be,
when I consider what a number of Men of very great & extra-
ordinary abilities have gone before me ~~& miscarryed~~ in the like
[Designs yet
Undertakings] I am not without Some Hopes, upon the Considera-
tion that the largest views are not always the clearest, & that

he

In my Entrance upon this Work [before I descend to more particular Subjects] [and] [to more particular enquiry] that which seems to me a wide-spread [in Philosophical enquiry] throughout the Philosophy of all ages.

that wch seems to lead [opinions] ~~speculations~~ a great many Errors and to have made the way to Knowledge very intricate & perplex'd.

that wch seems to lead a Philosopher in Speculation intricate & perplex'd & to lead him from the Search of innumerable Errors & difficulties in almost all parts of Knowledge.

~~Nay, they cannot choose but be full of~~

~~and I very much question whether they ever were or can be by any one else~~ cannot be

~~of that Kind~~

he who is Shortsighted will be apt to draw the Object nearer, & by a close & narrow Survey may perhaps discern that which had escaped far better Eyes.

~~[But I] have in the Entrance~~ ~~upon my~~ ~~upon this work~~ ~~before I proceed~~ [~~any further~~] I think it necessary ~~to~~ take notice of ~~[a very Powerfull & Universal Cause of Error & Confusion]~~ & that is the Opinion that there are Abstract Ideas or General Conceptions of Things. He who is not a perfect Stranger to the writings & [notions] of Philosophers must needs acknowledge that ~~no small~~ part of ~~their Disputes~~ [controversies] and ~~great about~~ ~~ing~~ Abstract Ideas. Those are, in a more especial manner, thought to be the Objects of those Sciences that go by the name of Logic & Metaphysics, & of all that which passes under the notion of the most abstracted & Sublime Philosophy. In all which [~~Speculative Sciences~~] you shall scarce find any Question handled [~~by the Philosophers~~] in such a manner as does not Suppose their Existence in the Mind, & that it is very well acquainted with them; ~~So that that~~ ~~of necessity be a~~ ~~will~~ [~~very much~~] ~~subject~~ ~~dangling~~ [~~innumerable~~] ~~absurd~~ & ~~contradictions~~ [opinions] if so be that Abstract General Ideas are perfectly ~~inconceivable~~ as I am ~~well~~ ~~afraid~~ [cannot be conceived by me] ~~I speak for my self~~ ~~what~~ ~~do~~ do I think it possible they should be conceived by any one else.]

By Abstract Idea, Genera, Species, Universal Notion all which amount to the same thing, as I find those terms explained by the best and ablest Writers, we are to understand Ideas which equally represent the Particulars of any Sort, & are made by the Mind which observing that the Individuals of each kind agree in some things, & differ in others, takes out & singles from the rest, that which is common to all, making thereof one abstract, General Idea. Which ~~General Idea~~ contains all those Ideas wherein the Particulars ~~do~~ of that kind agree ~~& partake~~ Separated from

&

A

& exclusive of all those other concomitant Ideas, whereby they ~~[Individuals]~~ are distinguish'd ~~[from each other]~~ one from another.
[to This abstract, general Idea, thus framed the Mind gives a General Name & lays it up & uses it as a Standard whereby to judge what Particulars are & what are not to be accounted of that Sort: those only which contain every part of the General Idea having a right to be admitted into that Sort & called by that Name.

For example, The Mind having obsv'd that Peter, James & John & resemble each other in certain common agreements of Shape & other Quality, leaves out of the complex Idea it has of Peter, James & that which is peculiar to each, retaining only that which is common to all. And so it makes one ~~abstract~~ Complex Idea, wherein all the Particulars ~~do~~ partake, abstracting entirely from & cutting off all those Circumstances & differences, which might determine it to any particular Existence. & after this manner you come by ~~the~~ precise, abstract Idea of ~~a~~ Man. In which ~~Idea~~ it is true there is included Colour, because there is no Man but hath some Colour, but then it can be neither white ~~[Colour]~~ nor black ~~[Colour]~~ nor any particular Colour, but Colour in General, because there is no one particular Colour wherein all Men ~~do~~ partake. In ~~the~~ like manner, you will tell me there is included Stature, but it is neither tall Stature, nor low Stature, nor yet middling Stature, but Stature in General. And so of the rest. ~~Suppose now I should ask whether you comprehended in this your abstract Idea of Man, the Ideas of Eyes, a Nose or Legs or Arms [this might perhaps puzzle you to a Stand for an Answer, for it must need~~ [you will own it to be an odd & imperfect Figure. The Idea of] ~~make an odd & imperfect Figure. The Idea of~~ [a] Man without all these; ~~yet it must be so to make it consistent with the Doctrine of Abstract Ideas, there being particular Men that want, some Arms, some Legs.~~

~~[some]~~ some

~~Short~~

~~Long~~

~~Scales~~

~~Scales~~

~~possibly~~

~~the particular Colour & Length~~

~~other~~
~~[some] Notes &c~~ Father

But Supposing the Abstract Idea of Man to be very conceivable, let us proceed to ~~[to what Happs abstractions]~~ how it ends to be enlarged into the more general & comprehensive Idea of Animal. There being a great variety of other Creatures ~~[as Bird]~~ that partake in some parts, but not all, of the Complex Idea of Man, the Mind leaving out those parts which are peculiar to Men, & retaining those only which are common to all the living Creatures, frames the Idea of Animal, which is more general than that of Man, it comprehending not only all particular Men but also all Birds, Beasts, Fishes & Insects. The constituent parts of ~~the complex Idea of Animal~~ are Body, Life, Sense & Spontaneous Motion. By Body is meant Body ~~in general~~, without any particular Shape or Figure, there being no one Shape or figure common to all Animals, Without covering either of Hair, or Feathers or ~~[Fins]~~ Scales & yet it is not naked. Hair, Feather, ~~[Fins]~~ Scales & Nakedness being peculiar distinguishing Properties of ~~[the]~~ particular Animals, & for that reason left out of the ~~General~~ Idea. Upon the same account, the Spontaneous Motion must be neither Walking, nor Flying nor Creeping, it is nevertheless a Motion, but w^t that Motion is it is not easy to Say.

In like manner a Man ~~[having been General Line]~~ by leaving out of his Idea of a Line ~~[all particular Colour & all particular Length]~~ the particular colour & length comes by the Idea of a Line, which is neither black, nor white, nor red &c nor long nor short, which he calls the abstract Idea of a Line, & which, for ought that I can see, is just Nothing. ~~For I ask whether a Line has any more than one particular Colour & one particular Length, w^ch [when they are] being left out, I beseech any one to consider what it is that remains~~

Whether others have this ~~marvellous~~ Wonderful Faculty of abstracting their Ideas

~~Thought~~

~~I can conceive well enough what is meant by Adequate & inadequate, clear & obscure, distinct & confused [illegible] but~~

Ideas, they can both tell. For my Self I dare be confident I have it not, & I am apt to think that some of those who fancy themselves to enjoy that Privilege, would upon looking narrowly into their own Thoughts, find they wanted it as much as I. For there was a time when being taunted & abused by Words, I did not in the least doubt my having it. But upon a strict survey of my Ability, I not only discover my own Deficiency in that Point, but also cannot conceive it possible that such a Power should be in the most perfect & exalted Understanding. I find I have a Faculty of Imagining, (conceiving or Representing to my Self the Ideas of those Particular Things I have perceived, & of variously Compounding & Dividing them. I can imagine a Man with two Heads, or the upper parts of a Man joyned to the Body of a Horse. I can consider the Hand, the Eye, the Nose each by it Self singled out, & Separated from the rest of the Body. But then whatever Eye or Nose I imagine they must have some particular Shape & Colour. The Idea of Man that I frame to my Self must be either of a White or a Black, or a Tawny, a Straight or a crooked, a Tall or a Low or a middling sized Man I cannot by any effort of [Imagination / Thought] frame to my Self an Idea of Man [exclusive of all particulars] that shall have nothing particular in it. For my Life I cannot comprehend Abstract Ideas.

And there are grounds to think, the far greatest part of Men will acknowledge themselves to be in my case. The generality of Men, which are Simple & illiterate never pretend to Abstract notions. It is said they are difficult & not to be attained without much Study & Speculation, we may therefore reasonably conclude that, if Such there be, they are altogether confined to the Learned.

But it must be confessed, I do not see what great advantage they give them above the rest of Mankind. He who considers that whatever has any existence in Nature, & can any wise affect or concern [him / it]

~~Incomprehensibleness~~ ~~to my Understanding~~

~~understanding~~

~~By any Intellect whatsoever~~

That a Contradiction cannot be conceived by any Human ~~understanding~~ Power is, I think, agreed on all hands. And it is no less clear to me ~~contition of~~ that the Description of an Abstract ^ does include a contradiction in it.

is Particular, will not find great cause to be discontent with his Faculty's, if they cannot reach a piece of Knowlege as useless as it is to find; which whether it be to be found even in those deep Thinkers may well be made a Question.

For besides the [Incomprehensibleness] to my understanding of abstract Ideas, (which may pass for an Argument, since those Gentlemen do not pretend to any new Faculty's, distinct from those of Ordinary Men) there are not wanting other Proofs against them. It is, I think, a received Axiom that an Impossibility cannot be conceived. For what created Intelligence will pretend to conceive, that which God cannot cause to be? Now it is on all Hands agreed, that nothing abstract or General can be made really to exist, whence it seems to follow, that it cannot have so much as an Ideal Existence in the Understanding.

I do not think it necessary to insist any more Large, against the Doctrine of Abstraction in this place, Especially for that the Absurdity's, which in the progress of this Work I shall observe to have sprung from that Doctrine, will yield plenty of Arguments a Posteriori against it. I proceed therefore to examine what can be alledg'd in Defence of the Doctrine of Abstraction & try if I can discover what it is that inclines the Men of Speculation to embrace an opinion so pregnant of Absurdity's, & so remote from Common Sense as that seems to be.

There has been a late Excellent & deservedly Esteem'd Philosopher, to whose Judgment, so far as Authority is of any weight with me, I would pay the utmost Deference. This Great Man, no doubt, has very much countenanc'd the Doctrine of Abstraction, by seeming to think, it having Abstract Ideas is that which puts the widest difference in point of Understanding betwixt Man & Beast. Thus Speaks He. The having of General Ideas is that which puts a perfect distinction

tinction betwixt Man & Brutes, & is an Excellency which the Facultys of Brutes do by no means attain unto. For it is evident we observe no Footsteps in them of making use of General Signs for [making] universal Ideas; from which we have reason to imagin that they have not the faculty of abstracting, or making general Ideas, since they have no use of Words or any other general Signs. and a little lower. Therefore I think we may suppose y^t. 'tis in this that the Species of Brutes are discriminated from Men, & 'tis that proper difference wherein they are wholly Separated & which at last widens to so wide a distance. For if they have any Ideas at all & are not bare Machins (as some would have them) we cannot deny them to have some reason. it seems as evident to me, that they do some of them in certain instances Reason, as that they have Sense, but it is only in particular Ideas, just as they received them from their Senses. They are the Utmost of them tied up within those narrow bounds, & have not (as I think) the faculty to enlarge them by any kind of Abstraction. Essay on Human Understanding. Book 2. Chap. 11. 5. 10. 11
3 I readily agree with this Author that the Faculties of Brutes can by no means attain to the making of abstract general Ideas. But then if that inability to abstract be made the distinguishing Property of that sort of Animals, I fear a great many of those that now pass for Men must be reduced into their Number.

The Reason which is here assign'd, why we have no grounds to think that Brutes have general Ideas, is that we observe in them no use of Words or any other General signs. Which is built on this Supposition. That the making use of Words implys the having of General Ideas, & that on the other hand ~~Reciprocally~~ those who have General Ideas cannot but make use of Words, or other Universal Signs, ~~whereby~~ to express ~~& signify~~ them ~~[that this is the]~~ From which it must follow, that Men who use Language and are able to abstract & generalize their Ideas, but Brutes [that do not] use it not, and destitute of that Faculty. That this is the sense & arguing of the Author of the Essay, will further appear, by his answering the Question he in another place puts. Since all things that exist are only particulars how come we by general Terms? His answer is. Words become general by being made the signs of general

~~prevent the use of Language by making~~

neral Ideas. Essay on Human Understanding. b.3 c.3 s.6. From which opinion I must crave leave to dissent, being of opinion that a Word becomes general by being ~~[the]~~ made the Sign, not of a General Idea but of many particular Ideas. And I am, as to what concerns myself, when I say the word Socrates is a proper ~~[or particular]~~ Name, & the word Man an appellation or general name, I mean no more than this viz. that ~~the~~ one is peculiar & appropriated to one particular person, the other common to a great many particular persons, each ~~[which]~~ ~~[these]~~ has an equall right ~~[propriety of Language]~~ to be called by the name Man. This, I say, is the whole Truth of the Matter & ~~and that I~~ make any Incomprehensible, Abstract Idea whereunto I annex the Name Man. ~~That word to [make] any Word, Sound or I know not what~~.

That great Man seems to think, the necessary ends of Language could not be attain'd, ~~[a]~~ without the use of Abstract Ideas. b.3 c.6 s.3 ~~[He shews it]~~ & elsewhere He shews it to be his opinion that they are made in order to Naming. b.3 c.1 s.3 He has those words. 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 has yet a farther improvement in the use of general terms whereby one word was made to mark a number of particular existences. Which advantagous use of Sounds was obtain'd 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 which the Ideas the Ideas they are used for are particular. Now I would fain know, why a Word may not be made to comprehend a great number of particular things in its Signification, without the ~~Intervention~~ help of a General Idea. Is it not possible to give the name ~~[Man to John, James & Peter, without]~~ Color to Black, White & Red & ~~[all]~~ ~~[the]~~ intervening ~~[Gill made that Stranger]~~ & to me, Incomprehensible Idea of ~~[Man but]~~ Color imparted ~~[shall have nothing of Particular in it]~~? Or must we imagine that a

Child

24

~~might~~

~~might~~

Every one experiences ~~may~~ convince him that ~~this~~ is all that, meant ~~[illegible] or~~ distinct from our Conceptions or was ~~generally held by the Schoolmen & [illegible] or they~~ held by the Peripatetics & Generality of the Schoolmen, nor yet for universal notions or Ideas as is the opinion of ~~that~~ Sort of Schoolmen (call'd Nominals & of the Author of the Essay.

Child upon Sight of a particular Body & being told it is called an Apple, must frame to himself a Gendral Idea ~~of~~ all particular Colour, Taste & Figure before He can attain to the use of the Word Apple, & apply it to all the particulars of that Sort of ~~Fruit~~ that come in his Way. This, Surely, is a Task too hard ~~& Metaphysical~~ to be performed by an Infant, just beginning to Speak, nay, & Appeal to the Experience of any grown Man, whether this be the course He takes in acquainting himself with the right use & Signification of any Word. Let any Man take a fair & impartial view of his own Thoughts, & then Determine, whether his Gendral Words do not become so, by being made to mark a Number of particular Existences, without any the least thought of Abstraction. For what, I pray, are Words but Signs of our Thoughts. & how are Signs of any Sort rendered Universal otherwise than by being made to Signify, or represent indifferently a Multitude of particular Things.

The Ideas that are in every Man's Mind lie hidden & cannot of themselves be brought into the view of another. It was therefore necessary for Discourse & Communication, that Men should institute Sounds to be Signs of their Ideas, which being excited in the Mind of the Hearer might bring along with them into his Understanding such Ideas, as in the Propriety of any Language were annexed to them. But because of the almost infinite Number & Variety of our Thoughts, it is impossible, & if it were possible would yet be a useless thing, to appropriate a particular [word to] Sign or Name to every one of them. From which it must necessarily follow, that one Word be made the Sign of a great number of particular Ideas, between which there is some likeness, & which can be said to be of the same Sort. But, upon those Sorts and Determin'd & Set out by Nature, as was thought by most Philosophers. Nor yet [word] limited by any precise, abstract Ideas settled in the

mind

~~thom~~

~~Do they~~

~~or (with the same thing) Meaning~~

~~Is Hood~~

~~Mind with the general Name annexed to [it] as is the opinion of the~~
~~Learned, nor does it in Truth seem to me to have any pro-~~
~~per Sound or Liuify at all. For if [there were] they had I dare not~~
~~say, has there could be those Doubts & Perplexi about the Sortings~~
~~of particular Beings, which [that Author] tells us of a good Part~~
~~do afford Sometimes to have happen'd. Neither do I think it nec-~~
~~-ry the Kinds & Species of Things should be so very accurately bounded~~
~~& marked out. Language being made by & for the common Use of Men~~
~~who do not ordinarily take notice of the minuter & less considerable~~
~~Differences of Things.~~ From [all] this it seems evident that the hav-
ing of General Names does not imply the having of General Ideas, but
only the marking by them a Number of particular Ideas. And that
all the Ends of Language may be & are attain'd without the help
of any such Faculty or Abstraction.

Which will be made yet more manifest if we consider the different
manners wherein Words [& Ideas] do stand for & represent Things.
represent Ideas & Ideas Things. There is no Similitude or Resemblance
betwixt Words & the Ideas that are marked by them. Any Name may
be used indifferently for the Sign of any Idea or any number of Ideas, it not be-
ing determin'd by any likeness to represent one more than another. But it
is not so with Ideas in regard of Things, of which they are supposed to be
the Copies & Images. They are not thought to represent them any otherwise,
than as they resemble them. Whence it follows, that an Idea is not capa-
ble of representing indifferently any Thing [or number of Things] it be-
ing limited by the likeness it bears to some particular [Thing] to rep-
resent it rather than any other. The Word Man may equally be put
to signify any particular Man I can think of. But I cannot frame an
Idea of Man which shall equally represent & correspond to each par-
26 ticular of that Sort of Creatures, that may possibly exist.

I shall

~~Insertion shows much of the Building and Digging~~ so doing nor consequently of

I shall ~~[only]~~ add one more Passage out of the Essay on Human Understanding, which is as follows. Abstract Ideas are not so obvious or easy to Children or the yet unexercised Mind as Particular ~~[Ideas]~~ ones. If they seem so to grown Men it is only because by constant & familiar use they are made so. For when we nicely reflect upon them we shall find that general Ideas are Fictions & contrivances of the Mind that ~~[general]~~ carry difficulty with them & do not so easily offer themselves as we are apt to imagine. For example, does it not require some pains & skill to form the general Idea of a Triangle (which is yet none of the most abstract, comprehensive & difficult) for it must be neither oblique nor rectangle, neither equilateral, equicrural nor Scalenon, but all & none of those at once. In short it is something imperfect that cannot exist, an Idea wherein some parts of several different & inconsistent Ideas are put together: It is true the Mind in this imperfect State has need of such Ideas, & makes all the haste to them it can, for the convenience of Communication & Enlargement of Knowledge, to both which it is naturally very much inclin'd. but yet one has reason to suspect such Ideas are marks of our Imperfection. at least this is enough to show, that the most abstract & general Ideas are not those that the Mind is fitted and most easily acquainted with, nor such as it's Sorry'st Knowledge is conversant about. B. 4 C. 7 S. 9. If any Man has the Faculty of framing in his mind such an Idea of a Triangle as is here described, it is in vain to pretend to dispute him out of it, nor would I go about it. all I desire is that every one would fully & certainly inform himself whether he has such an Idea or no. And this, methinks, can be no hard task for any one to perform. What more easy than for any one to look a little into his own Understanding, and there try whether he has, or can attain to have an Idea that shall correspond with the Description here given of the General Idea of a Triangle which is neither oblique nor rectangle, neither equilateral, equicrural nor Scalenon, but all and none of these at once. He that can conceive such manifest contradictions & Inconsistencys, 'tis fit he enjoy his Privilege. For my part ~~[I am well assured]~~ I have not the Power of making to my self those General Ideas;

neither

either for the convenient of communication with the Enlargement of Knowledge.

~~Thom~~ ~~our Thoughts~~

neither do I find that I have any need of them ~~for the controversy of communication and enlargement of knowledge. For which I am not sorry, because it is hard said one has reason to suspect such Ideas and marks of our imperfection. Tho', I must own, I do not see how this agrees with what has been above quoted out of the same Author, viz. The having of general Ideas is that which puts a great distinction betwixt Man & Brutes and is an Excellency which the faculties of Brutes do by no means attain unto.~~

It is observable, ~~what it is here said by that Author on this occasion~~ of the Difficulty that abstract Ideas carry with them, & the pains & Skill that is requisite to the forming them. To the same purpose Aristotle (who was certainly a great admirer and promoter of the Doctrine of Abstraction) has these Words χεδὸν δὲ καὶ χαλεπώτατα γνωρίζειν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἐστὶ τὰ μάλιστα καθόλου πορρωτάτω γὰρ τῶν αἰσθήσεών ἐστι. There is scarce any thing so incomprehensible to Men as the most universal notions because they are most remote from Sens. Metaph: Lib: 1 cap. 2. & It is on all hands agreed, that there is need of great Pains & Toil & Labour of the Mind to emancipate our Thoughts from particular Ideas, such as are taken in by the Senses, & raise them to those lofty Speculations which and conversant about abstract and Universal ones.

9 From all which the natural Consequence should seem to be, that so difficult a thing as the forming of abstract Ideas is not necessary for Communication, which is so easy & familiar to all sorts of Men, even the most Barbarous & unaccounting. But we are told if they seem obvious & easy to grown Men it is only because by constant & familiar use they are made so. Now I would fain know at what time it is, Men are employed in surmounting that Difficulty, & furnishing themselves with those necessary ~~Materials~~ of Discourse. It cannot be when they are grown up, for then they are not conscious of any such pains-taking. It remains therefore to be the Business of their Childhood. And surely the great & multiplied Labour of framing general notions will be found a hard Task for that tender age. Is it not a hard thing to imagine that a couple of Children cannot com-

mune

tack'd together numberless inconsistencys &c &c

~~can by no means~~

~~because~~

mune one with another of their Sugar-plumbs and Rattles, & the rest of their little Trinkets, till they have first framed in their minds general abstract Ideas, and annex'd them to every common Name they make use of?

Nor do I think they are a whit more needfull for enlargement of knowledge, than for communication. For tho' it be a point much insisted on in the Schools, that all knowledge is about Universals, yet I ~~could never bring my self to comprehend~~ see the force of this Doctrine. It is acknowledg'd that nothing has a fairer title to the name of Knowledge or Science than Geometry. Now I appeal to any man's thought, whether upon the entrance into that Study the first thing to be done is to try to conceive a Circle that is neither great nor small, nor of any determinate Radius, or to make Ideas of Triangles & Parallelograms, that are neither Rectangular nor Obliquangular &c. It is [~~true~~] one thing for a Proposition to be universally true, and another for it to be about Universal, natures or notions. ~~Though notwithstanding~~ Though that the three angles of a Triangle are equal to two right ones, is granted to be a Proposition universally true, it will not therefore follow, that we are to understand it of universal Triangles, or universal angles. It will suffice that it be true of [~~any particular Tri~~] the particular angles of any particular Triangle whatsoever.

But here it will be demanded, how can we know any Proposition to be true of all particular Triangles, except we have first seen it demonstrated of the general Idea of a Triangle, which equally agrees to & represents them all? For tho' a Property may be Demonstrated to belong to some one particular Triangle, it will not thence follow, that it equally belongs to [~~some~~] to any other Triangle which in all respects is not the same with the former. For instance, having Demonstrated that that the three angles of an Isosceles Rectangular Triangle are equal to two Right ones, I cannot therefore conclude this

affection

~~rectilineo~~
~~neibs~~

~~sides~~

~~bgs~~

affection agrees to all other Triangles, which have neither a right Angle, nor two equal Sides. It seems therefore, that to be certain this Proposition is universally true, we must either make a particular Demonstration for every particular Triangle, which is impossible, or else we must once for all Demonstrate it of the general Idea of a Triangle, in which all the particulars do indifferently partake, and by which they are all equally represented.

To which I answer, that notwithstanding the Idea I have in my mind, whilst I make the Demonstration, be that of some particular Triangle e.g. an Isosceles, Rectangular one whose Sides are of a determinate Length, I may nevertheless be certain that it extends to all other rectilinear Triangles of what Sort or Bigness soever. And that because neither the Right angle nor the Equality nor determinate Length of the Legs are at all considered in the Demonstration. 'Tis true the Diagram I have in my view does include these particulars, but then there is not the least mention made of them in the proof of the Proposition. It is not said the three angles are equal to two Right ones, because one of them is a right angle, or because the Legs are equal, or the corresponding are equal of the same Length. Which sufficiently shews that the Right angle might have been oblique & the Sides unequal and yet the Demonstration have held good. And for this reason it is, that I conclude that to be true of any obliquangular or Scalenon, which I had Demonstrated of a particular Right-angled Equicrural Triangle: And not because I Demonstrated the Proposition of the general Idea of a Triangle, which way all & none, it not being possible for me to conceive any Triangle whatsoever I cannot Delineate the like on Paper. But I believe no Man, whatever he may conceive, will pretend to describe a general Triangle with his pencil. This being rightly considered I believe we shall not be found to have any great need of those formal, immutable, universal Ideas, about which the Philoso-

phers

~~redisyo~~

~~this~~ ... ~~polain and~~

~~Abstract & Metaphysical Science~~

~~no other~~ ~~these~~

phors keep such a Stir and without which they think there can be no Science at all.

But what becomes of those general maxims, those first Principles of knowledge, so frequently in the mouths of the Metaphysicians all we are supposed to be about abstract & Universal Ideas? To which all the Answer I can make is, that whatever Proposition is made up of Terms Standing for general notions or Ideas, the same is to me, so far forth, [illegible] unintelligible. And whether it be, that those Speculative Gentlemen have by darnett & profound Study attain'd to an Elevation of Thought above the reach of ordinary Capacities and Endeavours, or whatever else be the Cause, Sure I am there are in their Writings many things which I now find my Self unable to Understand. Tho' being accustom'd to those forms of Speech I once thought there was no Difficulty in them. But this one thing seems pretty plain & certain. How high soever that goodly Fabrick of Metaphysics might have been rais'd, and by what Venerable Names soever it may be Supported, if [illegible]id be built on [illegible] foundation of Inconsistency & Contradiction, it is after all but a Castle in the Air.

It were an Endless as well as an useless thing to trace the Schoolmen, those great Masters of Abstraction, and all others whether Ancient or Modern Logicians and Metaphysicians, thro' those numerous intricate Labyrinths of Error and Dispute, which their Doctrine of abstract Notions, Seems to have led them into. What Bickerings & Controversy! and what a learned Dust has been raised about those Matters and what mighty Amusement and Advantage has been from thence derived to Mankind are things at this Day too clearly known, to need to be insisted on by me. nor has that Doctrine been confin'd to those two Sciences, that make the most avowed Profession of it. The Contagion thereof has Spread throughout all the parts

of

of Philosophy. It has invaded and overrun those Vsefull Studys of Physic, and Divinity, and even the Mathematicians themselves have had their full share of it.

When man consider the great pains, Industry and Arts that have for so many ages been layd out on the Cultivation and Advancement of the Sciences, and that notwithstanding all this, the far greatest part of them remain full of Doubts and Uncertainty, and Disputes that are like never to have an end, and even those that are thought to be Supported by the most clear and cogent Demonstrations, do contain in them Paradoxes that are perfectly irreconcilable to the Understandings of Men, And that taking all together a very small portion of them does Supply any real benefit to Mankind otherwise than by being an innocent Diversion and Amusement. I say upon the Consideration of all this, Men are wont to be cast into an Amazement and Despondency, and perfect contempt of all Study. But that Wonder and Despair may perhaps cease, upon a view of the false Principles and Wrong foundations of Sciences that have been made use of, Amongst all which there is none, methinks, of a More wide and Universal sway over the Thoughts of Studious Men, than that we have been endeavouring to detect and overthrow. ~~To me certainly it does not seem Strange that unprofitable debates, and absurd and extravagant opinions, Should abound in the Writings of those Men who disdaining the vulgar and obvious informations of Sense do in the Depth of their Understanding contemplate Abstract Ideas.~~

2c.2

I come now to consider the Source of this Prevailing notion, and that seems to me most evidently to be Language. And Surely nothing of Self could have been the Source of an opinion as Epidemical

as

~~mutual~~

[without chord being]

~~and~~

~~only~~

~~and~~

~~being stript~~

as il ~~seems~~ is absurd. That ~~[Words are]~~ the Conceit of abstract Ideas
ow's its birth and Origine to Words, will appear, as from other wa-
ys so also, from the plain Confession of the ablest Patrons of y^e
Doctrine, who ~~do~~ acknowleges that they are made in order to Nam-
ing, from which it is a clear Consequence, that if there had been
no such thing as Speech or Universal signs, there never had been
~~[Abstract Ideas]~~ any thought of abstract Ideas. I find il also declar-
ed in express terms that Generall Truths can never be well made known, and
very seldom apprehended but as conceived and expressed in Words, all which doth plain-
ly set forth the inseparable connexion and mutual dependence ~~[we have o-
ther]~~ that is thought to be between Words and abstract Ideas. For whereas
as il is elsewhere said ~~[there could be no Communication by general Names
except there were]~~ also general Ideas of which they were to be signs. We
~~are here on the other Hand told that~~ that general Ideas are necessary for Communication by general Names. Here on the other
Hand, we are told that names are needfull for the Understanding
of ~~[abstract notions or]~~ general Truths. Now by the bye, I would faine
know how il is possible for words, to make a Man apprehend that which
he cannot apprehend without them. I do not deny they are necessary for Communication, and so making me know the Ideas that are
in the Mind of Another. But when any Truth whether ~~[about Generall
or partic^r]~~ about general or particular is made known to me by words ~~[I can
not be any manner of]~~ so that I rightly apprehend the Ideas contained in it, I see no manner of reason, why I may not omit the
words, and yet retain as full and clear a Conception of the Ideas
themselves, as I had ~~[of them]~~ while they were cloathed with Words.
Words being, so far as I can see, of use for Recording and Communicating, but not absolutely apprehending Ideas. ~~[Signs therefore
things that]~~ will not do ~~[they stripping]~~ of the H-
ing

~~in a great measure~~

~~abstract~~

~~to think~~

~~general [conception]~~

~~one certain~~

Big as the thing for to keep a ward ~~any but~~ capable to the same Definition, and another to make it stand any where for the same Idea, ~~the same~~ is very easy but ~~the latter~~ absolutely impracticable.

~~tion of Words; but this I always look for as a sure and certain Sign that there were no clear and Determinate Ideas Understood~~. I proceed to shew the Manner, wherein Words have contributed to the growth and origine of that Mistake.

That which seems ~~to be principally~~ in a great measure to have drove men into the Conceit of [abstract] Ideas, is the Opinion, that every Name has, or ought to have, one only precise and settled Signification. Which inclines [Men] to think, that every particular and certain abstract, determinate, general Idea, that makes the true and only immediate Signification of each general Name. And that it is by the mediation of those abstract Ideas, that a general Name comes to signify any particular Thing. Whereas there is in Truth a diversity of Significations in every general Name whatsoever. ~~Except only the proper Names.~~ Nor is there any such thing as one precise and definite Signification annexed to each [particular] Name. All which does evidently follow from what has been already said, and will [to] clearly appear to any one by a little Reflexion.

But to this, I doubt not, it will be objected that every Name that has a Definition, is thereby tied down and restrained to one [certain] Signification. e.g. a Triangle is Defin'd to be a Plain Surface comprehended by three right lines. by which, that Name is limited to denote one certain Idea and no other. To which I answer, that in the Definition it is not said, whether the Surface be great or small, black or white, or transparent, or whether the sides are long or short, equal or unequal, or with what angles they are inclin'd to each other. In all which there may be great variety, and consequently there is no one settled Idea which limits the signification of the Word Triangle, for it avail to say, the abstract Idea of a Triangle, which bounds the signification of that Name, is it self undetermined, tho the An-

gles

A But to give a further account how Words came to introduce the Doctrine of Gonral Idoas, it must be observ'd that the Common opinion of the Signifycn of that Language hath no other End than the communicating our Idoas & that every Significant name stands for an Idoa. This being so, and it being withall certain that names which yet are not thought altogether insignificant do not always mark out a particular Idoa, it is straightway concluded that they stand for gonral ones.

That there are many names in use amongst Speculative men, which do not always suggest to others determinate, particular Idoas, or indeed any thing at all, is what no body will deny. And that there are Significant names to Denoting Things, whose Idoas are not gonral, is a Doctrine so receivd, that I shall not need to employ any more Reasoning to confirm it. Besides, a little attention will discover to any one that it is not necessary (even in the strictest Reasoning) that Significant Names which are made use of should always stand for Idoas they should excite in the understanding. The use of Words is various. Sometimes they are made to stand for the Things themselves we discourse about. Sometimes for our Ideas concerning them. Most part used as Signs in Casting up a Sum is not necessary to make right that the Figures should stand for the Numbers they are used to denote. In Reading and Discoursing Names are for the most part used as Letters are in Algebra in which though a particular Quantity be marked by each letter, yet to the right management of the whole it is not requisite that in every Step, the Letters should stand for the Ideas I first made them signify. Nor indeed is it always necessary that any Idea at all should be made by them, for in Demonstrations, after the manner of Euclid, it is sufficient to make use of such Letters as stand for Ideas, to keep the Understanding steadily fixed on those Ideas it had before framed to it self, without directing the Demonstration expressly upon them. In Algebra the Letters at first serve to lay down and keep in Memory certain Lengths, Areas, or Solids, which are supposed to be known or done. Each Letter suggests to the Thought that particular Quantity which it was appointed to stand for.

1

sides of we are not. For, besides the absurdity of such an Idea which has been already shown, it is evident that if the ~~simple Ideas or~~ parts i.e. the Line, Angles and Surface and themselves various and indetermin'd the complex Idea or whole ~~i.e. Triangle~~ cannot be one settled, determinate Idea.

A But to give a farther account, how Words came to introduce the Doctrine of Universal Ideas, it will be necessary to observe there is a notion current among those that pass for the ~~best~~ most Thinkers, that every Significant Name stands for an Idea. It is said by them that a Proposition cannot otherwise be understood than by [perceiving] ~~the Agreement or Disagreement of~~ the Ideas marked by the terms [thereof] of it. Whence it follows that according to those Men every Proposition that is not Jargon must consist of Terms or Names that carry along with them each a determinate Idea. This being so, and it being [certain] withall certain that Names which yet are not thought altogether insignificant do not always mark out particular Ideas it is straightaway concluded that they stand for general ones.

In answer to this I say that Names Significant Names do not always stand for Ideas but that they may be and are often used to good purpose [tho they are] without being supposed to stand for or represent any Idea at all. And as to what we are told of Understanding Propositions by [perceiving] the agreement or Disagreement of the Ideas marked by their Terms. This to me in many Cases seems absolutely false. For the better clearing and Demonstrating of all which I shall make use of some particular instance. Suppose I have the Idea of some one particular [Dog] Dog to which I give the name Melampus and then frame this Proposition Melampus is an animal. Where 'tis evident the Name Melampus denotes only one particular Idea. And as for the other Name or Term of the Proposition, there are a sort of Philosophers will tell you thereby 'tis

meant

as tho' it were possible that even things that could be universal
and

mind

which they perceive to agree with the particular Idea signified by the
word Melampus

mean not only a Universal Conception but also [corresponding thereto] a Universal Nature or General Reality existing without the Mind whereof Melampus doth partake. [But] this with reason is explo-ded as Nonsensical and absurd. But then those Men who have so clearly and fully detected the emptyness and insignificancy of that wretched Jargon [of Sps], and themselves to be equally unintelligible. For they will have it that if I understand what I say I must make the Name Animal Stand for an abstract, General Idea which agrees to and corresponds with the particular Idea marked by the Name Melampus. But if a Man may be allow'd to know his own meaning I do declare that in my thoughts the word Animal is neither supposed to stand for an Universal Nature nor yet for an abstract Idea which is no less absurd and incomprehensible as the other. Nor does it indeed in that Proposition Stand for any Idea [at all] at all. All that I intend to signify thereby being only this. That the particular [creature] thing I call Melampus has a right to be called by the Name Animal. And I do intreat any one to make this easy Trial. Let him but cast out of his [thoughts] the Words of the Proposition and then see whether two clear and determinate Ideas remain ~~in his Understanding~~ whereof he finds one to be conformable to the other. I presume it evidently in my self that upon laying aside all thought of the Word Melampus & an Animal I have remaining in my Mind one only naked and bare Idea viz. that particular one to which I give the Name Melampus. Tho' some there be that pretend they have also a general Idea signified by the Word Animal. [which Idea is made up of inconsistency and contradiction as has been already shewn]. Whether this or that be the Truth of the Matter I desire every particular person to consider and conclude for himself.

And

a

Does or in Truth any Does at all

And this methinks may pretty clearly inform us how Men might first have come to think there was a general Idea of Animal. For in the Proposition we have instanced in it is plain the Word animal is not supposed to stand for the Idea of any one particular [anima] [creature] animal. for if it be made stand for another different from that is marked by the Name Melampus, the Proposition is false and includes a Contradiction. And if it be made signify the very same individual that Melampus doth, it is a Fauloloey. But it is presumed that every Name stands for an Idea. It remains therefore that the Word animal stands for [the] general abstract Idea. [of Animal] In like manner we may be able with a little attention to discover how other general Ideas [of all sorts] might at first have been into the Thoughts of Men.

But further, to make it evident that Words may be used to good purpose without bringing into the mind determinate Ideas, I shall add this Instance. We are told [that] the Good Things which God hath prepared for them that love him and such as eye hath not seen nor ear heard nor hath it entered into the Heart of Man to conceive. What man will pretend to say these Words of the Scripture Writer are empty and [to] insignificant? And yet who is there that can say they bring into his Mind [determin] clear and determinate [Ideas] of the Good Things [not] in Store for them that love God? It may perhaps be said that those Words lay before us the clear and determinate abstract Ideas of Good in general and Thing in general. but I am afraid it will be found that those very abstract Ideas are every whit as remote from the Comprehension of Men as the particular pleasures of the Saints in Heaven. But say you, those Words of the Apostle must have some import they cannot be supposed to have been utter'd without all meaning and design whatsoever. I answer the Saying is very weighty and carrys with it

id a great Design, but it is not to raise in the Minds of Men the Abstract Ideas of Thing or Good nor yet the particular Ideas of the Joys of the Blessed. The Design is to make them more chearfull and forward in their Duty. And how this may be compass'd without making the words Good things [illegible] stand for and mark out to our Understandings any Ideas either general or particular, I proceed to Shew.

Upon mention of a Reward to a man for his pains and perseverance in any occupation whatsoever, it seems to me that three things do ordinarily ensue. For there may be excited in his Understanding an Idea of the particular good thing to him proposed for a Reward. There may also ensue thereupon an Alacrity and Steddiness in fulfilling those Conditions on which it is to be obtain'd, together with a Zealous Desire of Serving and pleasing the Person in whose Power it is to bestow that good Thing. All these things, I say, may and often do follow upon the pronunciation of those words that Declare the Recompense. Now I do not see any reason why the latter may not happen without the former. What is it that Hinders why a Man may not be Stirr'd up to Diligence and Zeal in his Duty by being told he shall have a good Thing for his Reward tho' at the same time there be excited in his Mind no other Idea than barely those of Sounds or Characters? When he was a Child he has frequently heard those Words used to him to create in him an Obedience to the Commands of those that Spoke them. and as he grew up he has found by Experience that upon the mentioning of those Words by an honest Man it has been his Interest to have doubled his Zeal and Activity for the Service of that Person. They there having grown up in his Mind a Customary Connexion betwixt the hearing that Proposition and being disposed to obey with chearfulness the Injunctions that accompany it. Neither is it material to this not to introduce into his mind any Idea marked by the Word Good Thing yet to

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action of the Mind

excite in him a willingness to perform that which is requir'd of him.
And this seems to me all that is design'd by the Speaker except only wn
he intends those words shall [be the mark of] signifie the Idea of some
particular thing. e.g. in the case I mention'd 'tis evident the Apostle
never intended the Words [good things] should [mark out to] our Understandings
the Ideas of those particular things our Faculties never attain'd to.
And yet I cannot think that he used them at random and without design
on the contrary it is my opinion that he used them to very good Pur-
pose namely to beget in us a Chearfulness and Zeal and Perseverance
in well Doing, without any thought of introducing into our Minds
the abstract Idea of Good Thing. If any one will joyn our so little
Reflexion of his own to what has been said, I doubt not, it will evidently
appear to him that general Names are often used in the Propriety
of Language without the Speaker designing them for marks of
Ideas in his own which he would [them] have them raise in the
Understanding of the Hearer.

~~Nor is it less certain that~~ proper Names themselves are not always
Spoken with a design to bring into our view the Ideas of those particu-
lar Things that are supposed to be annexed to them. For example wn
a Schoolman tells you that Aristotle hath said it, think you that he in-
tends ~~thereby~~ to excite in your Imagination the Idea of that
particular Man? All he means by it is only to dispose you to ac-
quiesce his opinion with that deference and Submission that Custom
has annexed to that Name. When a Man that has been accustom'd to
resign his Judgment [of] to the Authority of that Philosopher [that] upon
in reading of a Book meets with the letters that compose his Name he
forthwith yields his assent to the Doctrine it was brought to support and
that with such a quick and sudden [glance of Thought] as it is impossi-
ble any Idea either of the person or writings of that man should go
before.

as

~~the~~ putting the Mind in some particular Disposition

How we may conceive how it is possible for the promise that is made of

~~promise not to be~~

~~the motive that inclines of~~

~~To motive~~ the Good things of another life, ~~pro-~~

~~to~~ excite in us suitable Dispositions, ~~without the~~

~~the~~ tho' the words Good Things do not bring into our mind

particular Ideas of the pleasures of Heaven, ~~nor~~ yet the ~~go~~

Ideas of Good in General or Thing in general

Before, so close and immediate a Connexion has long Custom & Fashion
betwixt the very Word Aristotle and the notions of Apost and Rob-
bery in the Minds of some Men.

I intreat the Reader to reflect with himself and see if it 2
does not oft happen, either in hearing or reading a Discourse, that
the Passions of Delight, Love, Hatred, Admiration, Disdain &c [Doubt]
arise immediately in his Mind upon the perception of certain Words, with-
out any Idea coming between. At first, indeed, the Words might have occa-
sioned Ideas that may be apt to produce those Emotions of Mind. But if
I mistake not, it will be found that when Language is once grown fami-
liar [to a Man], the Hearing [it] of the Sound, or Sight of the Characters
is oft immediately attended with those Passions, which at first Words used
8 to be produced by the Intervention of Ideas that are now quite omitted.

From [Hence] it follows, that the Communicating of Ideas marked
by Words is not the chief and only End of Language, as it commonly Sup-
posed. There are other Ends [as], the raising of some Passion the exciting to
or deterring from an Action. To which the former is in many cases
barely Subservient and Sometimes entirely omitted when these can
be obtained without it as, I think does not infrequently happen in the
familiar use of Language.

I ask any Man whether every time [when] he talks another that Such an
Action is Honourable [and virtuous], with an intention to persuade him [to do it],
Idea of Honour [and Virtue] in his [those] view, and whether in reality 3
his intention be to raise those abstract Ideas [together] with [their] a-
greement to the [particular] Idea of that [particular] Action in the Understanding
of him he Speaks to. Or rather whether this be not his full Purpose
namely that those Words should excite in the mind of the Hearer an
Abhorrence of that [particular] Action and stir him up to the [perfor-
mance] of it?

Upon

or

arise

innumerable — manner of thing kind may be given
~~innumerable in manner of thing kind may be given~~
But ~~I cannot conceive~~ to behold in ~~innumerable~~ monstrous these things which may
one's observation will, I doubt not, plentifully suggest unto him.

Name

the Hoor

men

over and over — name — is the mark of an Idea

Upon hearing the Word Lie & Rascal, Indignation, Revenge
and the Suddain motion of Anger do instantly [ensue] in the minds
of Some Men, without [their] attending to the Definition of those Names
or taking the least notice of the Ideas that and supposed to stand for
mitted along with them, all that passion and disturbance having
been by Custom connected to those very Sounds themselves and the
[sound] of their utterance.

It is plain therefore that a Man may understand what is said to him
without having a clear and determinate Idea annexed to and marked
by every particular [Word] in the Discourse he hears. Nay, he may per-
fectly understand it. For what is it I pray to understand perfectly, but
only to understand all that is meant by the Person that Speaks? Which
very oft is nothing more than barely to excite in [his] mind certain
Emotions without any thought of those Ideas so much talk'd of
and so little understood. For the Truth whereof I appeal to every
[man's] own Experience.

I know not how this Doctrine will go down with those [Philoso-
phers] who may be apt to give the Title of Gibberish and Jargon to
all Discourse whatsoever so far forth as the Words contained in it are
not made the Signs of clear and determinate Ideas. Who think
it nonsense for a Man to assent to any Proposition each Term whereof
doth not bring into his mind a clear and distinct Idea, and tell
us, that every particular [Word] [hath] an Idea [annexed unto] which
never fails to accompany it where it is rightly understood. Which Op-
inion of theirs, how plausibly soever it might have been main-
tain'd by some Men to me to have introduced a great deal of Dif-
ficulty and Nonsense into the Reasonings of Men. Certainly noth-
ing could be fitter to bring forth and cherish the Doctrine of Abstract
Ideas. For when Men were indubitably conscious to themselves that

many

Names

good sense and sound

and a direct Repugnancy

many [Words] they used did not denote any particular Ideas, lest they
should be thought altogether insignificant, they were of necessi-
9 ty driven into the opinion that they stood for general ones.

But more effectually to show the absurdity of an opinion that carrys with it so great an appearance of [Clearness] and Strength of Reason, but is in effect most dangerous and destructive both to Religion and Religion, I shall, if I mistake not, in the progress of this Work demonstrate there to be Names well known and familiar to men which tho' they mark and [Stand] and Signify things, cannot be supposed to Signify Ideas of any sort either General or particular without the greatest confusion and contradiction it being absolutely
o impossible, that any faculty how exalted and Comprehensive Soever should frame Ideas of those Things.

We have, I think, shown the impossibility of abstract Ideas. we have considered what has been said in behalf of them by their ablest Patrons. and endeavoured to demonstrate they are of no use for those Ends, to which they were thought necessary. And, lastly, we have traced them to the Source from whence they flow, which appeared evidently to be Language.

Since therefore Words have been discovered to be so very apt to impose on the Understandings of men. I am resolved in my [Enquiries] to make as little use of them as possibly I can. Whatever Ideas I consider, I shall endeavour to take them bare and naked into my view, keeping out of my Thoughts, so far as I am able, those Names which long and constant use hath so strictly united to them.

Let us conceive a Solitary Man, one born and bred in such a place of the World, and in such Circumstances, as he shall never have had occasion to make use of Universal Signs for his Ideas. That man shall have a constant train of Particular Ideas passing in his Mind. Whatever

~~and~~

~~also~~

~~and found~~

had the ill fate to be

over he sees, hears, imagines, or any wise conceives is on all hands, own by the Patrons of abstract Ideas, granted to be particular. Let us withall suppose him under no necessity of labouring to se- cure him from Hunger and Cold; But of full ease, naturally of good Faculty, and [Quick] Contemplative. Such a one I should take to be nearer the Discovery of certain Great and Excellent Truths yet unknown, than he that has had the Education of the Schools, ~~has been instruct- ed in the ancient and modern Philosophy~~, and by much read- ing and Conversation has [furnished his Head] attained to the Know- ledge of Those Arts and Sciences, that make [such] a Noise in the World. It is true, the Knowledge of our Solitary Philosopher is not like to be so very wide and extended, it being confin'd to those few Particulars that come within his own Observation. But then, if he is like to have less Knowledge, he is [also] like to have fewer mistakes than other Men.

It cannot be denyed that Words are of excellent Use in that by their means all that Stock of Knowledge which has been purchased by the joynt Labours of inquisitive Men in all Ages and Nations may be drawn into the View, and made the Possession of one [Person] Single Person. But those [Parts] parts of Learning which con- tain the Knowledge of Things the most [and] noble and impor- tant of any within the reach of Human Reason, that have [been] so Signally perplex'd and darken'd, by the Abuse of Words and gene- ral ways of Speech, wherein they are delivered; that in the Study [Them] a Man cannot be too much upon his Guard, either in his private Meditations, or in reading the Writings, or hearing the Discourses of other Men, to prevent his being cheated [by the Subtlety and Fami- liarity of Sounds] into [a] belief that those Words stand for Ideas, which, in truth, stand for none at all. Which grand Mistake, it is almost in- credible

to take of the walk of Woods, ~~trees~~ and obtain a notion
of my own particular Way.

~~Springing up of~~ woods in almost all the Seasons

credible, what a Mist and a Darkness it has cast over the Understandings of Men, otherwise the most Rational and Clear-sighted.

I shall therefore endeavour so far as I am able, ~~to put my self in the Posture of the Solitary Philosopher~~ I will confine my thoughts and enquiries to the Ideas of my own Particular Ideas, from which I may expect to derive the following Advantages.

First. I shall be sure to get clear of all ~~Verbal~~ Controversies purely Verbal. The ~~stumbling at~~ springing up of which has been the most fatal obstruction to the Growth of true and Sound Knowledge: and accordingly is at this Day observ'd of such and made the great and just complaint of the wisest Men.

Secondly. It is reasonable to expect that by this the Trouble of Sounding, or Examining, or comprehending any Notion may be very much abridg'd. For it often happens that a Notion, when it is cloathed with Words, Idioms, Idioms and Phrases and hard to be conceiv'd, which yet being strip't of that Covering, the Idea shrinks into a narrow Compass, and is view'd almost by one 13 Glance of Thought.

Thirdly. I shall have fewer Objects to consider, than other Men seem to have had. ~~Because for that~~ I find my Self to want several of those supposed Ideas, in contemplating of which the Philosophers do usually spend much pains and Study. ~~Many of those subtile and~~ ~~will appear very surprising that pass for simple, particular Ideas. It is inconceivable that~~ can be believ'd what a wonderful Length and Scarcity of Days that Man shall detect who will lay aside all use of Words in his Meditations.

Fourthly. Having removed the Veil of Words, I may expect to have a clearer Prospect of the Ideas that remain in my Understanding. To behold the Deformity of Error we need only undress it.

Fifthly

~~clearly~~

~~of my own~~

~~without having any good parts of my own~~ ~~The writings and Dispositions of the Men~~
~~there is nothing more requisite~~

~~Scarce~~

Fifthly. This seems to be a good way to extricate my self out of that fine and subtile net of abstract Ideas; which has so miserably perplexed, and entangled the Minds of Men, and that with this peculiar Circumstance, that by how much the finer and the more curious was the Wit of any Man, by so much the deeper way he like to be ensnared, and faster held therein.

Sixthly. So long as I confine my thoughts to my own Ideas dressed of Words, I do not see how I can easily be mistaken. The objects I consider I clearly and adequately know. I cannot be deceived, in thinking I have an Idea which I have not. Nor, on the other Hand, can I be ignorant of any Idea that I have. It is not possible for me to think, any of my own Ideas are like or unlike which are not truly so. To discern the Agreements and Disagreements there are between my Ideas, to see what simple Ideas are included in any compound Idea, and what not, [all this I can do without being taught by others, there being requisite thereto nothing more than an attentive Perception of what passes in my own Understanding.

But the attainment of all these advantages does presuppose an entire deliverance from the Deception of Words, which I dare scarce promise my self. So difficult a thing it is, to dissolve a Union so early begun, and confirmed by so long a Habit, as that betwixt Words and Ideas.

Which difficulty seems to have been very much increased by the opinion of Abstract Ideas. For so long as Men thought abstract Ideas were annexed to their Words, it does not seem strange they should use Words for Ideas. It being found an impracticable thing, to lay aside the Word, and retain the Abstract Idea in the Mind, which in it self was perfectly inconceivable. This made it necessary for them to reason and meditate about Words, to which they supposed abstract

Ideas

~~for~~

~~obtain a clear and naked~~

~~Idea~~

Ideas were connected, and by means whereof they thought those Ideas could be conceiv'd, tho' they could not without them. ~~But surely those Ideas ought to be supported, that cannot endure the Light without a covering.~~

Another thing which makes Words and Ideas thought much ~~more inseparable~~ harder to separate than in truth they are, is the Opinion that every name stands for an Idea. [For] it is no Wonder, that Men should fatigue themselves in vain, and find it a very difficult Undertaking when they endeavour to [obtain a clear & distinct view of] the Ideas marked by those Words, which in Truth mark none at all. ~~I have already shewn many Names often do not even when they are not altogether [insignificant] and I shall more fully shew it hereafter.~~

16 ~~This~~ Seems to me the principal Cause why those Men that have so emphatically recommended to others the laying aside the use of Words in their Meditations, and contemplating their bare Ideas, have yet been so little able to [perform it] themselves. Of late many have been very sensible of the absurd Opinions, and insignificant Disputes, that grow out of the Abuse of Words. In order to remove these Evils, they advise well that we attend to the Ideas that are signified, and draw off our attention from the Words that signify them. But how good soever this advice may be, that they have given others, it is plain they little regarded it themselves. So long as they thought, the only immediate Office of Words was to signify Ideas, and that the immediate Signification of every general Name, was a determinate, abstract Idea.

Which having been shewn to be Mistakes, a man may now, with much greater ease, deliver himself from the Impositions of Words. He that knows he hath no other than particular Ideas, will not

puzzle

~~Separating~~

by

~~our Hand~~

~~Incumbrance and Delusion~~

~~Odious Consequences from~~

~~No~~

puzzle himself in vain to find out and consider the abstract Idea annexed to any Name. And He that knows Names ~~when made use in the propriety of Language~~ do not always stand for Ideas, will spare himself the Labour of looking for Ideas where there are none to be had. Those obstacles being removed I earnestly desire that every one would use his utmost Endeavours to attain a clear and naked view of the Ideas. He would consider them separating ~~the Idea and the word~~ from them all that Cloud and Vanish and Mist of Words, which so fatally blind the Judgement, and disinterpate the Attention of Men.

This is, I am confident, the shortest way to Knowledge, and cannot cost too much pains in coming at. In vain do we extend our view into the Heavens, and rake into the entrails of the Earth. In Vain do we consult the Writings and Discourses of Learned Men, and trace the dark Footsteps of Antiquity. We need only draw the curtain of Words, to behold the fairest tree of Knowledge whose Fruit is excellent and within the reach of our Hands ~~any Man to pluck it.~~

Unless we take care to clear the first Principles of Knowledge from the ~~Cloud~~ incumbrance and delusion of Words, ~~The Consequences we draw from them~~ We ~~make~~ may make infinite Reasonings upon them to no purpose. We may deduce Consequences from ~~one Idea or Notion to another~~ Consequences, and be never the Wiser. The farther we go, we shall only lose our Selves the more irrecoverably, and be the deeper entangled in Difficulties and mistakes.

I do therefore intreat whoever designs to read the following Sheets, that he would make my Words the Occasion of his own thinking, and endeavour to attain the same train of Thought in Reading, that I had in Writing them. By this means it will be

to discover the Truth or Falsity of what I say
be easy for him, [whatever mistakes I might have committed] He
will be out of all Danger of being Borrow'd by my Words. And I do
not see, what Inducement He can have to Err, in considering
his own naked, undisguised Ideas.

That I may contribute, so far as in me lies, to express my
Thoughts [to the] fairly to the understanding of the Reader, I
shall throughout endeavour to express my self in the clearest plain
st, and most familiar Manner, [I shall] abstain from [all Flourish
and Pomp of Words], all hard and unusual Terms, which are [com
monly] pretended by those that affect them to cover a Sense [obsc
ure and] abstracted and sublime. [I pretend not to boast of any
thing but what is clear, and] [can assent to the understand
8 ing of any Reasonable Man]