

# **ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE**



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but, the more we acquire, the greater is our delight, and, consequently, the more are we incited to increase both the one and the other; on the other hand, if our hopes happen to be frustrated we are plunged into the deepest sadness.

















forthcoming unless it has been made; but, in order to make it, there was need of another hammer and other tools, and so on to infinity. <sup>(30:6)</sup> We might thus vainly endeavor to prove that men have no power of working iron.

[31]:12 <sup>(31:1)</sup> But as men at first made use of the instruments supplied by nature to accomplish very easy pieces of workmanship, laboriously



[36]:14







[46]:16 (46:1) If anyone asks why I have not at the starting-point set



















itself and in itself.

[71]:26 <sup>(71:1)</sup> Wherefore the reality (forma) of true thought must exist in the thought itself, without reference to other thoughts; it does not acknowledge the object as its cause, but must depend on the actual power and nature of the understanding. <sup>(71:2)</sup> For, if we suppose that the understanding has perceived some new entity which has never existed, as some conceive the understanding of God before He created things (a perception which certainly could not arise from any object), and has



[75]:28 <sup>(75:1)</sup> But we are freed from mistakes of this kind, so long as we endeavor to examine all our perceptions by the standard of the given true idea. <sup>(75:2)</sup> We must take care, as has been said, to separate such perceptions from all those which arise from hearsay or unclassified experience. <sup>(75:3)</sup> Moreover, such mistakes arise from things being conceived too much in the abstract; for it is sufficiently self-evident that what I conceive as in its true object I cannot apply to anything else. <sup>(75:4)</sup> Lastly, they arise from a want of understanding of the primary elements







and easily confuse one with another. <sup>(82:5)</sup> I say also, physical. <sup>(82:6)</sup> For the imagination is only affected by physical objects. <sup>(82:7)</sup> As, then, the memory is strengthened both with and without the aid of the

[85]:32 <sup>(85:1)</sup> As regards as a true idea, we have shown that it is simple or compounded of simple ideas; that it shows how and why something is or has been made; and that its subjective effects in the soul correspond to the actual reality of its object. <sup>(85:2)</sup> This conclusion is identical with the saying of the ancients. <sup>86.</sup> The idea proceeds from cause and effect—; and from the effect of the imagination will



[91]:34 (91:1) Now, in order at length to pass on to the second part of this method, I shall first set forth the object aimed at, and next the means for its attainment. (91:2) The object aimed at is the acquisition of clear and distinct ideas, such as are produced by the pure intellect, and not by chance physical motions. (91:3) In order that all ideas may be reduced to unity, we shall endeavor so to associate and arrange them s\*



affirmative. (96:6) I speak of intellectual affirmation, giving little thought to verbal affirmations which, owing to the poverty of language, must sometimes, perhaps, be expressed negatively,

we can see that it is before all things necessary for us to deduce all our ideas from physical things—that is, from real entities, proceeding, as far as may be, according to the series of causes, from one real entity to another real entity, never passing to universals and abstractions, either for the purpose of deducing some real entity from them, or deducing them from some real entity. <sup>(99:4)</sup> Either of these processes interrupts the true progress of the understanding.

[100]:37 <sup>(100:1)</sup> But it must be observed that, by the series of causes and real entities, I do not here mean the series of particular and mutable things, but only the series of fixed and eternal things. <sup>(100:2)</sup> It would be impossible for human infirmity to follow up the series of particular

simultaneous. <sup>(102:4)</sup> Other aids are therefore needed besides those employed for understanding eternal things and their laws. <sup>(102:5)</sup> However, this is not the place to recount such aids, nor is there any



[106]:38 (106:1) If, as I stated in the first part, it belongs to the nature of thought to form true ideas, we must here inquire what is meant by the faculties and power of the understanding. (106:2) The chief part of our method is to understand as well as possible the powers of the intellect, and its nature; we are, therefore, compelled (by the considerations advanced in the second part of the method) necessarily to draw these conclusions from the definition itself of thought and understanding.

## **How to define the understanding:**

III. <sup>(108:5)</sup> Those ideas which the understanding forms absolutely express infinity; determinate ideas are derived from other ideas. <sup>(108:6)</sup> Thus in the idea of quantity, perceived by means of a cause, the quantity is determined, as when a body is perceived to be formed by the motion of a plane, a plane by the motion of a line, or, again, a line by the motion of a point. <sup>(108:7)</sup> All these are perceptions which do not serve towards understanding quantity,



[c] These matters are explained more at length elsewhere.

[d] N.B. I do no more here than enumerate the sciences necessary for our purpose; I lay no stress on their order.

[e] There is for the sciences but one end, to which they should all be directed.

[f] <sup>(1)</sup> In this case we do not understand anything of the cause from the consideration of it in the effect. <sup>(2)</sup> This is sufficiently evident from the fact that the cause is only spoken of in very general terms, such as—there exists then something; there exists then some power, &c.; or







measure of motion which, again, takes place by aid of imagination, we preserve no memory connected with pure intellect.

[[91e](#)] The chief rule of this part is, as appears from the first part, to review all the ideas coming to us through pure intellect, so as to distinguish them from such as we imagine: the distinction will be



