

LOCKE AND SENSITIVE KNOWLEDGE

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1. INTRODUCTION

Locke defines knowledge at the beginning of Book IV of the *Essay* as “*the perception of the connexion and agreement, or disagreement and repugnancy of any of our Ideas*” (IV.i.2).¹ So defined, knowledge varies along two dimensions. On the one hand, there are four “sorts” of knowledge: of identity or diversity; relation; co-existence or necessary connexion; and real existence. On the other hand, there are three “degrees” of knowledge: intuitive knowledge, which consists in the “immediate” perception of agreement or disagreement between ideas (IV.ii.1); demonstrative knowledge, which consists in the perception of agreement or disagreement by way of intermediate (or intervening) ideas; and sensitive knowledge, which is less certain than either of the other degrees, and is knowledge of “*the particular existence of finite Beings without us*” (IV.ii.14).

This paper considers the well-known tension between Locke’s definition of knowledge and his claim that we can know of the existence of things without the mind by sensation. According to the general definition of knowledge, knowledge consists in perceiving agreements or disagreements of ideas.² As the marginal summary for IV.i.2 makes clear, this is to be understood specifically as the claim that knowledge consists in perceiving agreements *between* ideas, and not the agreement of our ideas with anything else; hence, Locke introduces the definition of knowledge by explaining that “Since *the Mind*, in all its Thoughts and Reasonings, hath no other immediate Object but its own *Ideas*, which it alone does or can contemplate, it is

¹ References to Locke’s *Essay* are by book, chapter, section, and where relevant, edition.

² For ease of exposition I will use ‘agreements’ for ‘agreements and disagreements’.

evident, that our Knowledge is only conversant about them” (IV.i.1).³ However, sensitive knowledge appears to depend less on agreements between ideas than on agreements between our ideas and the mind-independent particulars that they are ideas *of*. This raises two questions. First, is Locke’s claim that we can have knowledge of the existence of mind-independent particulars inconsistent with his general definition of knowledge, as commentators since Stillingfleet have often suggested?⁴ Second, does Locke’s general epistemological framework lead inevitably to skepticism, as commentators since Stillingfleet have also often suggested? If all that is ever directly present to the mind are ideas, then how can we know of the existence of anything independent of those ideas? As Hume puts it:

Let us chace our imagination to the heavens, or to the utmost limits of the universe; we will never really advance a step beyond ourselves, nor can conceive any kind of existence, but those perceptions, which have appear’d in that narrow compass.⁵

³ For the suggestion that knowledge does not necessarily consist in perceiving agreements between ideas, see Yolton, *Locke and the Compass of Human Understanding*, 110. For discussion of Yolton’s interpretation, see, for instance, Woozley, “Some Remarks”; Mattern, “Locke: ‘Our Knowledge’”; Soles, “Locke’s Empiricism”; and Newman, “Locke on Sensitive Knowledge.”

⁴ Stillingfleet, *The Bishop of Worcester’s Answer to Mr. Locke’s Letter concerning Some Passages Relating to his Essay of Humane Understanding*. See also Gibson, *Locke’s Theory of Knowledge*, 166–67; Pringle-Patterson, “Introduction,” xl–xliv; Aaron, *John Locke*, 237–40 and 245–47; Lowe, *Locke on Human Understanding*, 174; Jolley, *Locke*, 187. Some commentators plead mitigating circumstances for this inconsistency. According to Aaron (*John Locke*, 240), Locke is consciously working with two different accounts of knowledge, but pressures of time or a lack of inclination meant that he did not make the changes to the *Essay* necessary to iron out the inconsistency. However, as Locke made numerous changes to later editions of the *Essay*, this response is not entirely satisfying. Moreover, it requires offering an uncharitable interpretation of Locke’s response to Stillingfleet, similar to that required by Rickless’s interpretation discussed in section 2.

⁵ Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, book 1, part 2, section 6, 49.

After arguing in section 2 that for Locke sensitive knowledge is indeed knowledge—and “Knowledge with a capital K”—the following sections consider the two questions above in turn. In section 3, I argue that sensitive knowledge is consistent with Locke’s general definition of knowledge once the role of ideas of reflection is recognized. In section 4, I argue that the Lockean epistemological framework does not lead inevitably to skepticism, but suggest that the threat of idealism remains.⁶

2. IS SENSITIVE KNOWLEDGE *KNOWLEDGE*?

The tension between Locke’s general definition of knowledge and the claim that we can know of the existence of things without the mind by sensation arises on the assumption that sensitive knowledge *is* knowledge. Some commentators have tried to relieve the tension by arguing that Locke himself did not think that sensitive knowledge was really knowledge—or at least not “Knowledge with a capital K”. This interpretation leaves Locke open to the charge that his epistemological framework tends inevitably towards skepticism; but it does at least clear him of the suspicion of inconsistency. Sophisticated versions of this general approach have recently been suggested by Samuel Rickless and Lex Newman.⁷ This section considers their interpretations in turn, before raising two more general problems with this type of interpretative approach.

In claiming that sensitive knowledge is the least certain degree of knowledge, Locke claims that it nevertheless “passes under” (IV.ii.14) or “deserves” (IV.xi.3) the name of knowledge. Based in part on an analysis of the early modern use of ‘passes for,’ Rickless argues

⁶ I do not here consider the question of what Lockean ideas are: for instance, whether they are mental operations like perceiving and remembering, the intentional objects of those acts, or real beings distinct from these acts. My own view is that Locke does not give an account of what (essentially) ideas are, and thinks that the question is one that we are unable to settle given our epistemic limitations. But nothing that I say here depends on this. For further discussion, see Allen, “Locke and the Nature of Ideas.”

⁷ Rickless, “Is Locke’s Theory of Knowledge Inconsistent?,” and Newman, “Locke on Sensitive Knowledge,” and “Locke on Knowledge,” particularly 323–24, 331–32, 342, and 349–51.

that the claim that sensitive knowledge passes for knowledge actually means that sensitive knowledge has the appearance of being knowledge, without really being so—just as Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* describes a suitor as passing for a man, without really being one. Sensitive knowledge passes for knowledge because it is sufficiently certain for practical purposes; we have an *assurance* of the existence of things without the mind that doesn't strictly speaking amount to *knowledge*. As Locke says in the context of discussing degrees of assent, there are forms of assurance that are indistinguishable from knowledge for practical purposes:

Where any particular thing, consonant to the constant Observation of our selves and others, in the like case, comes attested by the concurrent Reports of all that mention it, we as easily, and build as firmly upon it, as if it were certain Knowledge; ... These *Probabilities* rise so near to *Certainty*, that they govern our Thoughts as absolutely, and influence all our Actions as fully, as the most evident demonstration: and in what concerns us, we make little or no difference between them and certain Knowledge: our Belief thus grounded, rises to *Assurance*. (IV.xvi.6)

In this respect, the certainty that we have of the existence of finite particulars by the senses is supposedly similar to what Descartes describes as “moral certainty”:

certainty which is sufficient to regulate our behaviour, or which measures up to the certainty we have on matters relating to the conduct of life which we never normally doubt, though we know that it is possible, absolutely speaking, that they may be false.⁸

However, the claim that sensitive knowledge is not really knowledge faces a number of problems. An initial concern is that Locke's claim that sensitive knowledge “*deserves the name of Knowledge*” (IV.xi.3) cannot be explained away in the same way as the claim that sensitive knowledge “passes under” the name of knowledge. No matter how convincingly someone *appears* to be a man, it is far from clear that they *deserve* the name ‘man’ unless they really are a

⁸ Descartes, *The Principles of Philosophy*, part IV, section 205 (of the French Edition), CSM 1:289, n. 2.

man. ‘Deserving’ connotes merit or entitlement, and early modern usage does not appear to differ significantly from modern usage in this respect. It is therefore difficult to see how sensitive knowledge could merit the name knowledge, if it is not actually knowledge.⁹

The passage from IV.xvi.6, though suggestive, also fails to establish the claim that sensitive knowledge provides nothing more than practical (or moral) certainty. There are certainly striking similarities between this passage and the earlier discussion of sensitive knowledge: in discussing sensitive knowledge, Locke often uses the term “assurance” (once in IV.xi.2, four times in IV.xi.3, once in IV.xi.4, and twice in IV.xi.8); the reference to “concurrent Reports” in IV.xvi.6 is reminiscent of the “concurrent Reasons” Locke offers in IV.xi.4–7 for trusting the senses, including the fact that “Our *Senses*, in many cases, bear *witness* to the Truth of each other’s report” (IV.xi.7); and both passages are concerned with “particular existence” or “particular matters of fact,” as opposed to general truths. However, the passage from IV.xvi.6 is drawn from the later discussion of belief, probability, and opinion. The break from the earlier discussion of knowledge occurs two chapters after the discussion of sensitive knowledge; calling the second of these chapters “Some farther Considerations concerning our Knowledge” would seem particularly inappropriate if the preceding sections include a discussion of something that is not itself knowledge.

Besides, there is a fundamental contrast between the earlier discussion of sensitive knowledge and the later discussion of probable assurance. What is at issue in IV.xvi.6 is testimonial perceptual “knowledge” of the past—for instance, that it froze in England last winter or that there were swallows in summer (“if all *English*-men, who have occasion to mention it,

⁹ Compare another Lockean use of the locution ‘deserves the name’: “for *law*, in its true notion, *is* not so much the limitation as *the direction of a free and intelligent agent* to his proper interest ... that ill deserves the name of confinement which hedges us in only from bogs and precipices.” Locke’s point is not that the law really does limit our freedom, but that it is nevertheless inappropriate to describe it as doing so. Rather, the law “ill deserves the name confinement” because “*where there is no law, there is no freedom*: for *liberty* is, to be free from restraint and violence from others; which cannot be, where there is no law,” *Two Treatises of Government*, Second Treatise, chapter VI, section 57, 305–6.

should affirm [it] ... I think a Man could almost as little doubt of it, as that Seven and Four are Eleven”)—and inductive “knowledge” of the future—for instance, that fire warms. Particular matters of fact that are *currently perceived* are excluded from the scope of the discussion. The implication is that whilst beliefs about past and future particular matters of fact are treated no differently to certain knowledge *for practical purposes*, propositions assented to on the basis of what is currently perceived are known *properly speaking*. Like Descartes, Locke therefore appears to be suggesting that we can be more than morally certain of the existence of material objects.¹⁰ Sensitive knowledge *really is* knowledge.

This point is already foreshadowed in the earlier discussion of sensitive knowledge, where sensitive knowledge is contrasted with the belief, sufficient for practical purposes, that a man who I have just seen continues to exist when currently unperceived:

though it be highly probable, that Millions of Men do now exist, yet whilst I am alone writing this, I have not that Certainty of it, which we strictly call Knowledge; though the great likelihood of it puts me past doubt, and it be reasonable for me to do several things upon the confidence, that there are Men (and Men also of my acquaintance, with whom I have to do) now in the World: But this is but probability, not Knowledge. (IV.xi.9)

Moreover, Locke subsequently reiterates the claim that sensitive knowledge *is* knowledge in response to Stillingfleet (see section 3 below). To say that Locke never meant to imply in the *Essay* that sensitive knowledge is properly speaking knowledge requires interpreting him as either deliberately misrepresenting his official view to Stillingfleet, or else as registering a change of mind in his exchange with Stillingfleet that he failed to acknowledge in alterations made to the *Essay* to the fourth edition of 1700 and the fifth edition of 1706. Neither interpretation is particularly charitable.¹¹

¹⁰ See Descartes, *Principles of Philosophy*, IV.206, CSM 1:290–91.

¹¹ Rickless’s interpretation is more nuanced than this brief discussion indicates, and contains an important discussion of the distinction between mental and verbal propositions. But given the more general problems with

Newman's interpretation avoids these problems with Rickless's interpretation by insisting that sensitive knowledge *is* knowledge. At the same time, Newman attempts to alleviate the tension with Locke's general definition of knowledge by claiming that sensitive knowledge nevertheless falls short of "Knowledge with a capital K." According to Newman, this is because sensitive knowledge involves "dual cognized relations": it involves both the (known) perception of an agreement between two ideas, and a merely presumed (and hence unknown) judgment that the ideas stand in a causal relation to something external.¹²

Newman's interpretation, however, faces its own problems. One concern relates to the motivation for the claim that perceiving an agreement between ideas is not sufficient for sensitive knowledge to count as "Knowledge." (I will return to the question of what the ideas that are perceived to agree are in the next section.) Newman thinks it is necessary to introduce an "assured judgment" (which is not strictly speaking known) of the correspondence of our ideas with things without the mind in light of the discussion of "delusional knowledge" in IV.iv. In IV.iv, Locke considers the objection that if knowledge consists just in perceiving agreements between ideas, then the delusional visions of an enthusiast will be on a par with the reasoning of a sober man. Locke's solution to this challenge is to introduce a further condition that must be met if knowledge is to count as *real* knowledge: in addition to the agreement between ideas, there must also be "a conformity between our *Ideas* and the reality of Things" (IV.iv.3). On Newman's view, sensitive knowledge is a special case of real knowledge, both of which go beyond knowledge *per se*.¹³

But Locke himself distinguishes real knowledge and sensitive knowledge: real knowledge concerns the *nature* of things, sensitive knowledge concerns their *existence*. As he argues at the

denying that sensitive knowledge is knowledge that I consider at the end of the section, I will not consider this aspect of Rickless's interpretation.

¹² Newman's interpretation is similar in some respects to Woozley's ("Some Remarks"), according to which sensitive knowledge consists both in a perceived agreement between ideas and an assurance of an agreement between our ideas and reality.

¹³ Newman, "Locke on Sensitive Knowledge," 285, and "Locke on Knowledge," 346–51.

beginning of IV.iii, because knowledge consists in perceiving agreements between ideas (IV.iii.1), it follows that knowledge by sensation reaches “no farther than the Existence of Things,” and hence “*the extent of our Knowledge comes ... short of the reality of Things*” (IV.iii.5–6). This paves the way for the discussion of our knowledge of the *nature* of things in IV.iv. Moreover, as Locke later makes clear, the discussion of IV.iv specifically concerns abstract general knowledge, and not particular knowledge of existence—he opens IV.ix by signaling a break from the prior discussion, noting that “Hitherto we have only consider the Essences of Things, which being only abstract *Ideas*, and thereby removed in our Thoughts from particular Existence ... gives us no Knowledge of real Existence at all” (IV.ix.1).¹⁴

Newman’s claim that sensitive knowledge involves judgment raises further problems. Locke talks about judgment in relation to perception elsewhere, most notably in discussing Molyneux’s Question, warning that we frequently “take that for the Perception of our Sensation, which is an *Idea* formed by our Judgment” (II.ix.9, editions 2–5)—for example, when the idea of a variously shadowed flat circle is transformed by judgment into the idea of a round globe on the basis of custom. However, Locke never suggests that sensitive knowledge also involves judgment. In contrast to those who think that it is possible to make a question of whether we are able to “infern the existence of any thing without us” from the existence of an idea in our minds, Locke insists that “we are provided with an Evidence, that puts us past doubting” (II.ii.14), and what provides this evidence are “our Senses themselves” (IV.xi.3, editions 2–5); no further inference or reasoning is needed. In this respect, Locke’s view differs sharply from those who think that the senses only provide knowledge of the existence of material particulars in conjunction with reason. Famously associated with Descartes, this view was common amongst Locke’s more rationalistic contemporaries.¹⁵ As Ralph Cudworth, the pre-eminent Cambridge Platonist and father of Locke’s friend Damaris Masham, puts the point in the course of criticizing Hobbes’s empiricism:

¹⁴ Compare Soles, “Is Locke an Imagist?,” particularly 56–57.

¹⁵ For instance, *The Principles of Philosophy*, II.1, CSM 1:223; *Meditations on First Philosophy*, CSM 2:61–62; and *Sixth Set of Replies to the Meditations*, CSM 2:294–96.

We grant that the *Evidence* of Particular Bodies, existing *Hic & Nunc*, without us, doth necessarily depend upon the *Information of Sense*: but yet nevertheless the *Certainty* of this very *Evidence*, is not from *Sense* alone, but from a *Complication of Reason and Understanding* together with it.¹⁶

Indeed, not only is there no suggestion in Locke that sensitive knowledge involves judgment; judgment could not play the role that Locke would require it to anyway. The problem with sensitive knowledge is that it appears to depend on agreements between our ideas and mind-independent objects, not between ideas themselves. But judgment is *itself* defined in terms of agreements between ideas: it is “the putting *Ideas* together, or separating them from one another in the Mind, when their certain Agreement or Disagreement is not perceived, but *presumed* to be so” (IV.xiv.4). So, if there is a problem with sensitive knowledge, then there is just as much of a problem with “sensitive judgment.”¹⁷

Setting aside these specific concerns with Rickless’s and Newman’s interpretations, there are two more general problems with views according to which sensitive knowledge is not really “Knowledge.” First, if sensitive knowledge is not “Knowledge,” then it is difficult to make sense of the structure of Locke’s argument in IV.xi. Both Rickless and Newman defend the claim that sensitive knowledge is less than fully certain knowledge by pointing to the merely probabilistic arguments Locke offers for the belief in the existence of things without the mind at IV.xi.4–7: that we lack particular ideas if we lack appropriate sense organs; that sensations are involuntary and more distinct than ideas revived by our minds; that sensations are accompanied by pleasure and pain, but memories are not; and that different senses verify each others’ reports.¹⁸ However,

¹⁶ Cudworth, *True Intellectual System*, 637.

¹⁷ See also Rickless, “Is Locke’s Theory of Knowledge Inconsistent?” 91–92.

¹⁸ According to Rickless, the “claim that sensitive knowledge is a kind of assurance (and not a kind of verbal or mental knowledge, strictly understood) is supported by the way in which Locke attempts to prove the existence of sensible extra-mental things,” and this is by “an inference to the best explanation that can establish no more than the probable existence of such causes” (“Is Locke’s Theory of Knowledge Inconsistent?” 96). Similarly, according

Locke describes these as merely “concurrent Reasons” that “farther confirm” the assurance that we have “from our Senses themselves” (IV.xi.3, editions 2–5). The implication is that the certainty of sensitive knowledge has been established to Locke’s satisfaction by the end of IV.xi.3.

Second, Locke’s definition of knowledge presents a problem for existential knowledge in general, not just sensitive knowledge in particular.¹⁹ Existential knowledge of any kind depends essentially on the way that the world is, and not merely how it is represented as being; in particular, it requires that the things represented really exist. Locke thinks that we can have existential knowledge of God, ourselves, and finite material particulars. But if we are worried that sensitive knowledge cannot consist solely in perceiving agreements between ideas, and must instead consist in the agreement of our ideas with the objects that they are ideas *of*, then the same ought to be true of knowledge of the existence of God and ourselves. If this is right, then Locke can only *consciously* allow that sensitive knowledge is not really “Knowledge”—and thereby avoid the charge of inconsistency—if he is also prepared to allow that we do not really “Know” of the existence of God or ourselves either. However, there is no evidence that Locke would find either possibility even remotely acceptable. Although one of the central conclusions of the *Essay* is that “The Candle, that is set up in is, shines bright enough for all our Purposes” (I.i.5), Locke is at pains to insist that we can be absolutely certain of our own existence by intuition (IV.ix), and

to Newman, “Insofar as sensitive knowledge extends beyond the mind’s ideas, we should expect that Locke would support cognition of this further relation by appeal to probable judgment. It is no surprise, then, that he puts forward, in E IV.xi, a series of *probabilistic* proofs in support of sensitive knowledge” (“Locke on Knowledge,” 350).

¹⁹ Although commentators often focus on the tension between Locke’s definition of knowledge and sensitive knowledge, the tension between Locke’s definition of knowledge and existential knowledge more generally is noted by, amongst others, Aaron, *John Locke*, 239; Mattern, “Locke: ‘Our Knowledge,’” 226; and Owen, “Locke on Sensitive Knowledge”, 4.

know of God's existence by demonstration (IV.x). There are therefore good reasons for understanding Locke literally as claiming that sensitive knowledge really *is* knowledge.²⁰

3. SENSITIVE KNOWLEDGE AS AGREEMENT BETWEEN IDEAS

If sensitive knowledge really *is* knowledge, then there are at least three questions that need to be addressed. First, what are the ideas that are perceived to agree? Second, what are Locke's reasons for thinking that perception of the agreement between these ideas is sufficient to generate knowledge of the existence of finite material particulars? Finally, in what sense is sensitive knowledge nevertheless less certain than either intuitive or demonstrative knowledge?

Starting with the first question and working backwards, the second of the two ideas that is perceived to agree is the idea of actual real existence. Locke introduces the fourth sort of knowledge by saying that "The fourth and last sort, is that of *actual real Existence* agreeing to any *Idea*" (IV.i.7). The context suggests that this should be understood as the *idea of actual real*

²⁰ Mattern ("Locke: 'Our Knowledge'"; see also Soles, "Locke's Empiricism") attempts to resolve the apparent logical conflict between Locke's definition of knowledge and existential knowledge (in general) by offering an interpretation of Locke's claim that all knowledge is knowledge of propositions (e.g. *Essay*, II.xxxiii.19). According to Mattern, perceiving an agreement between ideas in the case of existential propositions amounts simply to perceiving the truth of the proposition; it does not consist in perceiving an agreement between the ideas out of which the proposition is composed, as in the case of abstract general knowledge. But although I agree with Mattern about the propositional nature of Lockean knowledge, it is not clear that Locke employs two different uses of the phrase 'agreement of ideas' in relation to existential and abstract general propositions. Nor is it clear that the broader usage that Mattern appeals to in the case of existential knowledge is ultimately consistent with Locke's definition of knowledge, given that perceiving the truth of an existential proposition on Mattern's proposal apparently involves perceiving agreements amongst the extra-mental entities to which our ideas refer (see also Rickless, "Is Locke's Theory of Knowledge Inconsistent?," 86–90). Besides, Mattern only focuses on the logical conflict between the definition of knowledge and existential knowledge in general, and she does not consider the specific problem of whether the senses provide certain knowledge of the existence of particular finite material bodies.

existence, and not actual real existence “itself”—this is consistent with Locke’s general definition of knowledge, and follows on from the previous section which Locke introduces by saying that “The third sort of Agreement, or Disagreement to be found in our *Ideas* . . . ”²¹ Notice that for Locke the idea of existence is itself insufficient for sensitive knowledge, because existence is a simple idea that is suggested by every idea within the mind (II.vii.7; IV.ii.14). In contrast, the idea of actual real existence denotes existence in the world. In the case of knowledge of finite material particulars (it will differ slightly in relation to God and ourselves), the idea of actual real existence amounts to the idea “that something really exists, that causes that Sensation in me” (IV.xi.2).

This in turn introduces the idea that actual real existence is perceived to agree with: the idea of actual sensation. Central to Locke’s account of sensitive knowledge is a distinction between *having* and *receiving* ideas. For Locke there is no “necessary connexion of *real Existence*” with any idea, except for the idea of God, that we merely *have* in our minds (IV.xi.1). Instead, it is the *receiving* of ideas into our minds—and crucially our awareness of receiving ideas into our minds—that generates sensitive knowledge:

the having the *Idea* of any thing in our Mind, no more proves the Existence of that Thing, than the picture of a Man evidences his being in the World, or the Vision of a Dream make thereby a true History. . . . ‘Tis therefore the actual receiving of *Ideas* from without, that gives us notice of the *Existence* of other Things (IV.xi.1–2).

We are aware of receiving ideas from without by reflection: along with sensation, one of the two “Fountains of Knowledge” from which all the mind’s ideas ultimately derive, and which is directed towards the “*internal Operations of our Minds*” (II.i.2). The ideas that we receive in sensation, such as ideas of qualities like white, sweet, square, and objects like paper and wormwood, are accompanied by a reflective “perception and Consciousness . . . of the actual entrance of *Ideas*” (IV.ii.14). This reflective idea of sensation—the awareness of receiving ideas from without—which accompanies the ideas that enter the mind in sensation is the counterpart

²¹ Compare Ayers, *Locke*, volume 1, 159; Newman, “Locke on Knowledge,” 331.

of the reflective idea that accompanies ideas revived in memory: the “additional Perception” that the mind “has had them before” that is annexed to ideas of, say, white and sweet when they are recalled (II.x.2, editions 2–5; see also I.iv.20 and II.x.7, both editions 2–5). Sensitive knowledge therefore consists in perceiving the agreement of the reflective idea of actual sensation—the awareness of the mental operation of receiving ideas from without—with the idea of actual real existence—the idea of the existence of something distinct from us which causes us to receive those ideas. For instance, we know of the existence of a piece of paper when we perceive the agreement of the reflective idea of sensation that accompanies the idea of white which we receive from the paper, with the idea of the existence of something that causes us to receive that idea of white.

It is precisely this view that Locke reiterates to Stillingfleet, in response to the charge that the definition of knowledge as the perception of the agreement of ideas makes knowledge of material particulars impossible. Locke starts by reaffirming his general definition of knowledge, explaining that:

Every thing which we either know or believe, is some proposition: now no proposition can be framed as the object of our knowledge or assent, wherein two ideas are not joined to, or separated from one another.²²

In the case of existential knowledge, the ideas out of which the known proposition is composed include the idea of existence. For instance, in the case of knowledge that “something exists in the world, whereof I have no idea”:

existence is affirmed of something, some being: and I have as clear an idea of existence and something, the two things joined in that proposition, as I have of them in this proposition, ‘something exists in the world, whereof I have an idea.’²³

²² *Mr. Locke’s Reply*, 357.

²³ *Mr Locke’s Reply*, 357–58.

In the specific case of sensitive knowledge, Locke tells Stillingfleet that he overlooks the crucial distinction drawn in IV.xi.1–2 between *having* and *receiving* ideas: “you mistake one thing for another, viz. the idea that has by a former sensation been lodged in the mind, for actually receiving any idea, *i.e.* actual sensation.” Assuming that we are reflectively aware of “actually receiving any idea,” Locke explicitly identifies the ideas between which an agreement can be perceived as the ideas of actual existence and actual sensation:

Now the two ideas, that in this case are perceived to agree, and do thereby produce knowledge, are the idea of actual sensation (which is an action whereof I have a clear and distinct idea) and the idea of actual existence of something without me that causes that sensation.²⁴

The claim that actual sensation “is an action whereof I have a clear and distinct idea” suggests that the idea of actual sensation is the reflective idea of the mental operation of sensation, and not the ideas (of white, sweet, square, and so on) actually received in sensation.²⁵ (The claim that we passively receive ideas in sensation plays an important role in Locke’s epistemology, but Locke still describes sensation as an “Operation” (II.x.15) and one of the mind’s “Actions” (II.xix.1).²⁶) Although Locke’s account of sensitive knowledge in response to Stillingfleet is perhaps slightly more explicit than it is in the *Essay*, it does not differ essentially. Locke therefore

²⁴ *Mr. Locke’s Reply*, 360.

²⁵ Contrast Ayers, *Locke*, 159, according to whom the idea of existence is perceived to agree with the ideas received via the senses (for example, ideas of white or sweet). Distinguishing between ideas of reflection and the ideas that are the objects of different mental operations allows Locke to mark distinctions between mental operations without simply appealing to something like force and vivacity. For discussion, see below.

²⁶ For discussion of the role of passivity in Locke’s epistemology, and some of the problems that it raises, see Bolton, “The Taxonomy of Ideas in Locke’s *Essay*,” 78–83.

neither dissembles in his response to Stillingfleet, nor indicates a change of mind from the view expressed in the *Essay*.²⁷

Identifying the ideas which we perceive to agree as actual sensation and actual real existence raises a further question: what is the relationship of the reflective idea of actual sensation—and reflective ideas of mental operations more generally—to the ideas (of white, sweet, square, and so on) received in sensation—and the ideas that are the objects of other mental operations more generally? Locke's discussions suggest two alternatives. According to the first, we are able to distinguish mental operations like sensation, memory, and thought, by noting a difference in something extrinsic to the ideas that are the objects of these mental operations; for instance, we distinguish perceiving and remembering by noticing separate simple ideas received via reflection. According to the second alternative, the perceivable difference between different mental operations is grounded in something intrinsic to the ideas that are the objects of these operations, and consists in something like a difference in their clarity and distinctness, or force and vivacity.

For instance, Locke introduces the claim that there is an introspectively evident difference between perceiving and remembering in the first sustained discussion of sensitive knowledge as follows:

I ask any one, Whether he be not invincibly conscious to himself of a different Perception, when he looks on the Sun by day, and thinks on it by night; when he actually tastes Wormwood, or smells a Rose, or only thinks on that Savour, or Odour? We as plainly find the difference there is between any *Idea* revived in our Minds by own Memory, and actually coming into our Minds by our Senses, as we do between any two distinct *Ideas*. (IV.ii.14)

²⁷ This interpretation is similar to that suggested by Nagel, "Sensitive Knowledge: Locke on Skepticism and Sensation." The current interpretation differs from Nagel's primarily in emphasizing the importance of the authority of the senses in Locke's response to the skeptic; Nagel focuses instead on sensation's relationship to pain and pleasure.

The rhetorical questions of the first sentence are consistent with the differences between perceiving and remembering being either extrinsic or intrinsic to the ideas that are the objects of these operations: we might either be invincibly conscious that the reflective ideas of our mental operations of perceiving and remembering differ, or that the ideas of the sun, wormwood, and roses, that we perceive and remember themselves differ. Locke's response to these rhetorical questions appears to suggest the second alternative: although you might understand "the difference there is between any *Idea* revived in our Minds by own Memory, and actually coming into our Minds by our Senses" as a merely extrinsic difference in the accompanying reflective ideas, it perhaps seems more natural to understand this as claiming that the difference we "plainly find" is intrinsic to the ideas that are perceived and remembered. This is consistent with Locke's earlier description of ideas stored in memory as "*laid in fading Colours*" (II.x.5), and his contrasting description of the ideas received via sensation as "very vivid and sensible" (II.xix.4).²⁸

However, there are reasons for treating the differences between perceiving and remembering as extrinsic to the ideas that are objects of these operations. A viable epistemology of memory requires that it is possible to remember what was once perceived, and Locke often suggests that the very same idea can be revived in memory as enters via the senses.²⁹ But it is difficult to see how this could be possible if there is an intrinsic difference, in terms of something like force and vivacity, between the ideas perceived and remembered. If the idea of white becomes dull and faded when it is placed in the "Store-house of our *Ideas*," then in what sense is it still the idea of white when it is revived—and not, say, the idea of grey?

²⁸ In IV.ii.14, Locke emphasizes that we can perceive, and therefore know, that perceiving differs from remembering or imagining. But simply perceiving the disagreement between perceiving and remembering or imagining, without perceiving what this disagreement consists in, does not of itself allow us to conclude anything about the nature of perceiving, and in particular does not of itself allow us to conclude that it consists in receiving ideas from without. In general, knowledge claims for Locke are not restricted to, nor indeed normally express, knowledge simply of the identity and diversity of ideas (III.viii.1).

²⁹ For example, "The same *Idea*, when it again recurs without the operation of the like Object on the external Sensory, is *Remembrance*" (II.xix.1).

At the very least, Locke is not restricted to appealing to differences in the objects of different mental operations to establish the diversity of these operations. By introducing reflection as a source of ideas, Locke is a more expansive empiricist than Hobbes before him, or Berkeley and Hume after.³⁰ This allows Locke to meet one of Cudworth's objections to Hobbes's empiricism: that since we do not get the ideas of life, cognition, knowledge, reason, memory, volition, appetite, or even sense, from the external senses, then there must be an innate source of ideas over and above outer experience.³¹ Recognizing reflection as a distinct form of experience also avoids standard criticisms of attempts to distinguish between perception and imagination solely on the basis of something like force and vivacity, which appears both extensionally inadequate (there are forceful imaginings and dull sensations), and at best serves only to draw a distinction in degree not in kind. Although Locke therefore often appears to suggest that there are differences intrinsic to ideas perceived and remembered, he at least has the resources to mark distinctions between perception and memory independently of any object-level differences.³²

Having identified the two ideas that are perceived to agree, and considered the relationship of the reflective idea of sensation to the ideas received in sensation, the next question is to consider Locke's reasons for thinking that perceiving the agreement of these ideas is sufficient for knowledge. For the perceived agreement to count as knowledge, the assurance that we have

³⁰ Berkeley rejects the existence of ideas of reflection on the grounds that "An Idea being it self unactive cannot be the resemblance or image of an Active thing" (*Philosophical Commentaries*, section 684). Although Hume talks of ideas of reflection, he means by this ideas of the passions and pleasure and pain (*A Treatise of Human Nature*, 1.1.2, 11).

³¹ For Cudworth's criticism, see *True Intellectual System*, 636, and 731–32. It only meets Cudworth's objection in part, because he also claims that Hobbes is unable to account for our possession of abstract general ideas, including those which comprise the idea of God: "*A Substance, Absolutely Perfect, Infinitely Good, Wise and Powerful, Necessarily Self-existent, and the Cause of all other things.*" Locke's accounts of the additional mental operations of composition and abstraction in book II of the *Essay* are intended to fill this lacuna. For further discussion, see Allen, "Ideas."

³² For further discussion of the relationship between the ideas received in sensation and the reflective idea of sensation, see Stuart, "Having Locke's Ideas."

of the existence of things without the mind cannot depend solely on the “concurrent Reasons” offered at IV.xi.4–7; these provide merely probable assurance, not certainty. Instead, the assurance that we have of the existence of things without the mind comes for Locke from “our Senses themselves” (IV.xi.3). Given the circumspect attitude towards the senses expressed by Locke’s more rationalistic contemporaries, we might wonder whether this confidence in the authority of the senses is warranted. Locke’s response is that we *cannot but* trust basic cognitive faculties like sensation and reflection:

This is certain, the confidence that our Faculties do not herein deceive us, is the greatest assurance we are capable of, concerning the Existence of material Beings. For we cannot act any thing, but by our Faculties; nor talk of Knowledge it self, but by the help of those Faculties, which are fitted to apprehend even what Knowledge is. (IV.xi.3)

In the background are perhaps concerns about Descartes’s attempts to use reason to prove the reliability of reason in the *Meditations*.³³ Once the reliability of reason is called into question, it can become difficult to see how the reliability of reason can then be vindicated. Although modern commentators usually resist the suggestion that Descartes’s appeal to the (clearly and distinctly perceived) existence of a non-deceiving God is circular (or at least problematically so), Descartes’s contemporaries were often less charitable. Cudworth, for instance, complains that Descartes’s argument “plainly . . . move[s] round in a *Circle*,” and this is “a gross oversight, which the forementioned Philosopher seems plainly guilty of.”³⁴

Sensation and reflection occupy a similarly foundational role in Locke’s philosophy of mind to reason in Descartes’s. Similar problems therefore arise for Locke if we call into question the reliability of these basic cognitive faculties: once the reliability of experience is called into question, it becomes difficult to see how its reliability can then be vindicated. For rationalists like

³³ Ayers (*Locke*, 155–65) also connects Locke’s discussion of the authority of the senses with similar discussions in Lucretius.

³⁴ Cudworth, *True Intellectual System*, 717. See also Arnauld, *Fourth Set of Objections*, CSM 2:150.

Descartes or Cudworth, it is possible to call the reliability of the senses into question—and find them wanting—because it is possible to adopt a perspective that is untainted by the inherent frailties and limitations of sensation; the distinct faculty of reason provides an external perspective. Reason is distinct from the senses at least (but not exclusively) to the extent that reason can be employed about ideas that are genetically independent of experience: these ideas are innate to the mind, or occasionally located directly in the mind of God. Although Locke’s epistemology contains echoes of seventeenth century rationalism—particularly in his accounts of intuitive and demonstrative knowledge—Locke is an empiricist at least in the sense that all the ideas with which the mind is furnished, and which constitute the “Instruments, or Materials, of our Knowledge” (II.xxxiii.19), derive ultimately from experience.³⁵ Whilst Locke recognizes the existence of a faculty of reason (IV.xvii.2), reason is dependent on the senses to the extent that the ideas about which it is employed have their footing in experience; as such it does not provide an independent perspective from which to assess the reliability of the senses. If all our ideas are ultimately derived from experience, and all knowledge consists in perceiving agreements between ideas, then we cannot expect to be able to achieve knowledge unless we can rely on the materials that experience provides; as they say in computing, “garbage in, garbage out.” If the senses are unreliable, then this is liable to infect our entire cognitive economy.³⁶

Indeed for Locke, the very attempt to ask the question about the reliability of the senses presupposes their reliability. Given that we only know what knowledge is by reflection (II.xix.2), we cannot even identify the subject matter under discussion without relying on reflection. To then ask whether reflection is reliable—and specifically whether our reflective awareness of

³⁵ On the rationalistic elements of Locke’s epistemology, see, for instance, Gibson, *Locke’s Theory of Knowledge*, 205–22; Aaron, *John Locke*, 220–24; and compare Descartes, *Rules for the Direction of the Mind*, rule 3, CSM 1:13–15.

³⁶ We also need to be able to rely on the mental operations—discerning, abstracting, compounding, remembering, and so on—that are employed about ideas received via the senses. But no matter how reliable these operations are, they are worthless if we cannot rely on the ideas about which they are employed. By analogy, we cannot draw true conclusions from false premisses, no matter how impeccable our reasoning. (This is only an analogy, as for Locke it is propositions that are the primary bearers of truth, not ideas (II.xxxii.1).)

receiving of ideas from without is capable of generating knowledge—requires us to assume the reliability of reflection in calling the reliability of reflection into question. As Locke says to the skeptic:

If any one say, a Dream may do the same thing, and all these *Ideas* may be produced in us, without any external Objects, he may please to dream that I make him this Answer, 1. That 'tis no great matter, whether I remove his Scruple, or no: Where all is but Dream, Reasoning and Arguments are of no use, Truth and Knowledge nothing. (IV.ii.14)

The skeptic's arguments do not so much undermine our claims to knowledge, as undermine any sense that the word 'knowledge' might have. If we cannot rely on reflection to ground our awareness of our own mental operations, then we cannot rely on reflection to furnish our minds with the ideas that give talk of 'knowledge' its sense. Without ideas for our words to stand for, all discussion of knowledge would become "nothing but so much insignificant Noise" (III.ii.7).

The fact that sensitive knowledge derives entirely from the senses in turn helps to explain the sense in which knowledge of the existence of things without the mind is nevertheless less certain than either intuitive or demonstrative knowledge (IV.ii.14, IV.xi.3)—something which is otherwise easy to explain on the assumption that sensitive knowledge is not really knowledge. First, the senses differ from reason in only providing knowledge of the existence of objects that are present to them (IV.iii.21, IV.xi.9); this is because sensitive knowledge consists in the awareness of receiving ideas from without, and we are only aware of receiving ideas from without in the presence of objects which produce ideas in us. It is therefore possible to doubt the current existence of things without the mind when they are not present to the senses.³⁷ In this respect, the reason why sensitive knowledge is less certain than either intuitive or demonstrative knowledge is similar to part of the reason why demonstrative knowledge is itself less certain than intuitive knowledge: whereas it is possible to doubt the truth of a proposition

³⁷ Although we can know of their past existence by memory (IV.xi.11).

that can be known demonstratively prior to actually producing the demonstration (IV.ii.5), intuitively knowable agreements are perceived “at the first sight of the *Ideas* together” (IV.ii.1).

But even when we are actually receiving ideas from without, a particular kind of doubt remains possible in the case of sensitive knowledge. Whereas reason is employed about “the clear abstract *Ideas* of our own Minds” (IV.xi.3), the reflective awareness of receiving ideas from without can be rendered indistinct and obscure by a failure to attend carefully to our own mental lives.³⁸ Although we are constantly aware of the mind’s operations to at least some degree, clear and distinct awareness of the mind’s operations requires attention: “like floating Visions, they [i.e. mental operations] make not deep Impressions enough, to leave in the Mind clear distinct lasting *Ideas*, till the Understanding turns inwards upon it self, *reflects* on its own *Operations*, and makes them the Object of its own Contemplation” (II.i.8). Again, this echoes part of the reason why demonstrative knowledge is itself less certain than intuitive knowledge: demonstrative knowledge requires “pains and attention” (IV.ii.4), and the agreements between ideas linked by a chain of reasoning are less clearly perceived than agreements between ideas that can be perceived immediately (IV.ii.6).

4. SENSITIVE KNOWLEDGE AND SKEPTICISM

If sensitive knowledge is consistent with Locke’s general definition of knowledge, what about the second commonly leveled objection: that Locke’s epistemological framework leads inevitably to skepticism? Even taking into account the role of the reflective idea of sensation, we might wonder whether Locke is warranted in claiming that we can know of the existence of things without the mind by sensation. We are still only directly aware of ideas, even if these include ideas of our own mental operations. But if all that is ever present to the mind are ideas, can we really know of the existence of anything independent of those ideas? Just as having the idea of

³⁸ Ideas are obscure if they are not such that “the Objects themselves, from whence they were taken, did or might, in a well-ordered Sensation or Perception, present them” (II.xxix.2); an idea is indistinct if it is “not sufficiently distinguishable from another, from which it ought to be different” (II.xxix.4).

something before our minds does not prove the extra-mental existence of what that idea is an idea of, does consciousness of (or, consciousness as of) the entrance of ideas into the mind guarantee the existence of finite material particulars outside the mind that cause those sensations?

Accounting for dreams and hallucinations presents a particularly acute problem in this respect. In the same way that we are reflectively aware of receiving ideas from without in sensation and having ideas that have previously passed through the mind in memory, Locke suggests that we have distinct reflective ideas of the mental actions of dreaming and perhaps also hallucinating. Dreaming is “the having of *Ideas*,”—and notice that unlike sensation, dreaming is the *having*, not the *receiving* of ideas—“(whilst the outward Senses are stopp’d, so that they receive no outward Objects with their usual quickness,) in the mind, not suggested by any external Objects, or known occasion; nor under any Choice or Conduct of the Understanding at all.” Hallucinating is in turn tentatively identified as a form of dreaming: “whether that, which we call *Extasy*, be not dreaming with the Eyes open, I leave to be examined” (II.xix.1).

The problem is not that the claim that we can normally distinguish between different mental operations is itself implausible. Sensation typically has what James Gibson, following William James, calls a “peculiar tang.”³⁹ Although difficult to describe, this sensational tang is normally lacking from episodes of imagining, remembering, dreaming, and even many actual cases of hallucination: despite the philosophical obsession with hallucinations that are subjectively indiscriminable from veridical perceptual experiences, actual cases of hallucination often fall far short of this ideal.

However, the mind’s awareness of its own operations is far from perfect, and we often make mistakes about exactly which type of mental action is occurring. For instance, we can mistake memory for imagination, imagination for memory, dreams and hallucinations for

³⁹ *Locke’s Theory of Knowledge*, 173. Compare William James’s claim, made in the context of discussing *Essay*, II.ii.2, that “The brain is so made that all currents in it run one way. Consciousness of some sort goes with all the currents, but it is only when new currents are entering that it has the sensational *tang*. And it is only then that consciousness directly *encounters* (to use a word of Mr. Bradley’s) a reality outside of itself.” *The Principles of Psychology*, volume 2, 7.

sensations, and sensations for dreams and hallucinations. One seemingly natural explanation of why sensations, dreams, and hallucinations in particular can be subjectively indiscriminable is that they can all be caused by the same local activity in the brain, regardless of its distal causal aetiology. Essentially these points are made by Cudworth against Hobbes, in support of the rationalistic claim that knowledge of the existence of finite particulars depends on the conjunction of sense and reason:

if our *Nerves* and *Brain* be inwardly so moved, and affected, as they would be by such an Object present, when indeed it is absent, and no other Motion or Sensation, in the mean time prevail against it and obliterate it; then must that Object of necessity seem to us present. Moreover those *Imaginations*, that spring and bubble from the Soul it self, are commonly taken for *Sensations* by us when asleep, and sometimes in *Melancholick* and *Phanciful* Persons also, when awake.⁴⁰

Even though Hobbes does not recognize reflection as a distinct form of experience, the point might seem to generalize to Locke's more nuanced view of sensory experience as a conjunction of sense and reflection: it might seem that the reflective awareness as of receiving ideas from without could also be produced in the absence of any external object acting on the senses. If so, then awareness as of receiving ideas from without would not guarantee the existence of something independent of the subject (or at least the subject's brain).

But from the Lockean perspective, there are reasons for resisting the suggestion that the awareness of receiving ideas from without could be produced in the absence of any external object acting on the senses. As far as Locke is concerned, we can know that the appearance of ideas before the mind must have *some* cause, because we can know with intuitive certainty that "bare *nothing* can no more produce any real Being, that it can be equal to two right Angles" (IV.x.3); this is a central premiss in Locke's argument for the existence of God, and a principle that Locke holds

⁴⁰ *True Intellectual System*, 637.

in common with more rationalistic contemporaries like Descartes and Cudworth.⁴¹ Given that nothing can come from nothing, the extreme skeptical hypothesis that our sensations are entirely *uncaused* can therefore be ruled out.

This leaves open the possibility that our sensations might be caused by something other than finite material beings external to the mind acting on the sense organs: for instance, by direct stimulation of the brain, or unwilled activity in the mind. But whether this is possible in turn depends in part on whether causation is a relation between logically distinct entities, and in particular whether one and the same effect—in this case a reflective idea of sensation—could be produced by any one of a number of distinct causes—such as the action of an external object on the sense organs, an internal movement of the nerves or brain, or activity of the mind. Locke’s epistemic modesty would appear to preclude him from giving a definitive answer to this question, but he often appears to suggest a pre-Humean view of causal relations as necessary connexions, such that knowledge of causes can, at least in principle, be “read off” their effects *a priori*. As he says when considering the limits of human knowledge:

Did we know the Mechanical affections of the Particles of *Rhubarb*, *Hemlock*, *Opium*, and a *Man* ... we should be able to tell before Hand, that *Rhubarb* will purge, *Hemlock* kill, and *Opium* make a Man sleep (IV.iii.25).

Locke’s background theory of causation therefore promises to rule out the possibility of the same mental event occurring when sensing and dreaming or hallucinating, irrespective of the presence or absence of an external object.⁴²

⁴¹ Compare, for instance, Descartes, *Principles*, I.18, CSM 1:199; Cudworth, *True Intellectual System*, e.g. 728–29. On the similarity of Locke’s argument for the existence of God to Cudworth’s, see Ayers, *Locke*, volume 2, 169–83.

⁴² Locke notes that ideas from memory sometimes “start up in our Minds of their own accord, and offer themselves to the Understanding; and very often are roused and tumbled out of their dark Cells, into open Day-light, by some turbulent and tempestuous Passion; our Affections bringing *Ideas* to our Memory, which had otherwise lain quiet and unregarded” (II.x.7). But he does not suggest that in these situations we mistakenly believe that the ideas which

It would still need to be explained how we can mistake dreams and hallucinations for sensations, if this is not because the same mental event occurs in each case (where this includes having the same reflective ideas). But as I have already noted in considering why sensitive knowledge is the least certain degree of knowledge, Locke allows that our reflective ideas can be obscure and indistinct, if we do not pay sufficient attention to our mental lives. In so far as these ideas are obscure and indistinct, they are unsuited to generating knowledge. In this respect, reflection plays a similar role in Locke's account of dreams and hallucinations to reason in Descartes's. For Descartes, confusing dreams for sensations marks a failure of rationality: mistakes are mistakes of judgment, arising from a failure to check the deliverances of the senses against each other, our memory, and knowledge of the causes of error; these mistakes are normally occasioned by competing demands on our attention ("the pressure of things to be done does not always allow us to stop and make such a meticulous check").⁴³ For Locke, according to whom sensitive knowledge depends entirely on the senses, mistaking dreams for sensations is instead a failure of reflection, occasioned by a lack of attention to the workings of our own minds.

This account of dreams and hallucinations, and the causal theory underpinning it, is obviously controversial. But even granting that awareness of receiving ideas from without guarantees the existence of *something* outside the mind that causes those sensations, a problem remains. Sensitive knowledge consists specifically in knowledge of "*the particular existence of finite Beings without us*" (IV.ii.14), and finite material beings in particular (IV.xi.12). However, from the Lockean perspective the possibility that the ideas we receive from without are produced in our minds directly by God, and not material particulars, ultimately cannot be ruled out. The awareness of receiving of ideas from without informs us that there is something or things which cause these effects in us. Moreover, we can know from the diversity of the ideas that we receive

appear in our minds are not memories. Indeed, it is essential to Locke's argument against the existence of innate ideas that ideas revived from memory are *always* accompanied by the awareness that they have passed through the mind before; otherwise, innate ideas might be in the mind unperceived in the same way that memories are (I.iv.20).

⁴³ See *Meditations*, CSM 2:61–62.

that there is a diversity of powers to produce those ideas in the thing or things without the mind: as Locke says in arguing that all our simple ideas are adequate (they “perfectly represent those Archetypes, which the Mind supposes them taken from,” II.xxxi.1), “if Sugar produce in us the *Ideas*, which we call Whiteness, and Sweetness, we are sure there is a power in Sugar to produce those *Ideas* in our Minds, or else they could not have been produced by it” (II.xxxi.2). Yet a diversity of powers does not of itself entail a diversity of objects. For all we can know, there might only be one thing without the mind that causes the ideas that we receive: God.

So even though Locke’s definition of knowledge is consistent with the possibility of sensitive knowledge, and the Lockean epistemological framework does not lead inevitably to skepticism, the spectre of idealism remains. Although this might seem bad enough, it is ultimately unlikely to worry Locke. Our faculties are “accommodated to the use of Life” (IV.xi.8). Given that pleasure and pain accompany sensation but not memory, and to be good is to be apt to cause pleasure or diminish pain (II.xx.2), sensation is at least “sufficient to direct us in the attaining of the Good and avoiding the Evil” (IV.xi.8). Ultimately, this is all that is required in order to secure “the great Ends of Morality and Religion” (IV.iii.6).⁴⁴

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⁴⁴ A version of this paper was presented at the CHiPhi Early Modern Philosophy Workshop at the University of Sheffield. Thanks to the audience for their helpful comments and questions. Thanks, too, to two anonymous referees, and the editor of *The Journal of the History of Philosophy*, Steven Nadler.

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