



***THOMAS
HOBBS***

***THE ELEMENTS
OF LAW,
NATURAL AND
POLITIC***



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The Elements of Law, Natural and Politic

EAN 8596547019671

DigiCat, 2022

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PART I

Chapter 1: The General Division of Man's Natural Faculties

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1. The true and perspicuous explication of the Elements of Laws, Natural and Politic, which is my present scope, dependeth upon the knowledge of what is human nature, what is a body politic, and what it is we call a law. Concerning which points, as the writings of men from antiquity downward have still increased, so also have the doubts and controversies concerning the same, and seeing that true knowledge begetteth not doubt, nor controversy, but knowledge; it is manifest from the present controversies, that they which have heretofore written thereof, have not well understood their own subject.

2. Harm I can do none though I err no less than they. For I shall leave men but as they are in doubt and dispute. But intending not to take any principle upon trust, but only to put men in mind what they know already, or may know by their own experience, I hope to err the less; and when I do, it must proceed from too hasty concluding, which I will endeavour as much as I can to avoid.

3. On the other side, if reasoning aright I win not consent (which may very easily happen) from them that being confident of their own knowledge weigh not what is said, the fault is not mine but theirs. For as it is my part to show my reasons, so it is theirs to bring attention.

4. Man's nature is the sum of his natural faculties and powers, as the faculties of nutrition, motion, generation, sense, reason, &c. For these powers we do unanimously call

natural, and are contained in the definition of man, under these words, animal and rational.

5. According to the two principal parts of man, I divide his faculties into two sorts, faculties of the body, and faculties of the mind.

6. Since the minute and distinct anatomy of the powers of the body is nothing necessary to the present purpose, I will only sum them up into these three heads, power nutritive, power motive, and power generative.

7. Of the powers of the mind there be two sorts, cognitive or imaginative or conceptive; and motive. And first of the cognitive.

8. For the understanding of what I mean by the power cognitive, we must remember and acknowledge that there be in our minds continually certain images or conceptions of the things without us, insomuch that if a man could be alive, and all the rest of the world annihilated, he should nevertheless retain the image thereof, and of all those things which he had before seen and perceived in it; every man by his own experience knowing that the absence or destruction of things once imagined, doth not cause the absence or destruction of the imagination itself. This imagery and representations of the qualities of things without us is that we call our cognition, imagination, ideas, notice, conception, or knowledge of them. And the faculty, or power, by which we are capable of such knowledge, is that I here call power cognitive, or conceptive, the power of knowing or conceiving.

Chapter 2: The Cause of Sense

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1. Having declared what I mean by the word conception, and other words equivalent thereunto, I come to the conceptions themselves, to show their difference, their causes, and the manner of their production as far as is necessary for this place.

2. Originally all conceptions proceed from the actions of the thing itself, whereof it is the conception. Now when the action is present, the conception it produceth is called SENSE, and the thing by whose action the same is produced is called the OBJECT of sense.

3. By our several organs we have several conceptions of several qualities in the objects; for by sight we have a conception or image composed of colour or figure, which is all the notice and knowledge the object imparteth to us of its nature by the eye. By hearing we have a conception called sound, which is all the knowledge we have of the quality of the object from the ear. And so the rest of the senses also are conceptions of several qualities, or natures of their objects.

4. Because the image in vision consisting in colour and shape is the knowledge we have of the qualities of the object of that sense; it is no hard matter for a man to fall into this opinion, that the same colour and shape are the very qualities themselves; and for the same cause, that sound and noise are the qualities of the bell, or of the air. And this opinion hath been so long received, that the contrary must needs appear a great paradox; and yet the

introduction of species visible and intelligible (which is necessary for the maintenance of that opinion) passing to and fro from the object, is worse than any paradox, as being a plain impossibility. I shall therefore endeavour to make plain these four points:

(1) That the subject wherein colour and image are inherent, is not the object or thing seen.

(2) That that is nothing without us really which we call an image or colour.

(3) That the said image or colour is but an apparition unto us of that motion, agitation, or alteration, which the object worketh in the brain or spirits, or some internal substance of the head.

(4) That as in conception by vision, so also in the conceptions that arise from other senses, the subject of their inherence is not the object, but the sentient.

5. Every man hath so much experience as to have seen the sun and other visible objects by rejection in the water and in glasses, and this alone is sufficient for this conclusion: that colour and image may be there where the thing seen is not. But because it may be said that notwithstanding the image in the water be not in the object, but a thing merely phantastical, yet there may be colour really in the thing itself; I will urge further this experience: that divers times men see directly the same object double, as two candles for one, which may happen by distemper, or otherwise without distemper if a man will, the organs being either in their right temper, or equally distempered. The colours and figures in two such images of the same thing cannot be inherent both therein, because the thing seen

cannot be in two places: one of these images thereof is not inherent in the object. But seeing the organs of sight are then in equal temper or equal distemper, the one of them is no more inherent than the other, and consequently neither of them both are in the object; which is the first proposition mentioned in the precedent section.

6. Secondly, that the image of any thing seen by rejection in glass or water or the like, is not any thing in or behind the glass, or in or under the water, every man may prove to himself; which is the second proposition.

7. For the third, we are to consider first, that upon every great agitation or concussion of the brain, as it happeneth from a stroke, especially if the stroke be upon the eye, whereby the optic nerve suffereth any great violence, there appeareth before the eyes a certain light, which light is nothing without, but an apparition only, all that is real being the concussion or motion of the parts of that nerve. From which experience we may conclude, that apparition of light without, is really nothing but motion within. If therefore from lucid bodies there can be derived motion, so as to affect the optic nerve in such manner as is proper thereunto, there will follow an image of light somewhere in that line by which the motion was last derived unto the eye; that is to say, in the object, if we look directly on it, and in the glass or water, when we look upon it in the line of rejection, which in effect is the third proposition, namely, That image and colour is but an apparition unto us of that motion, agitation, or alteration, which the object worketh in the brain, or spirits, or some internal substance in the head.

8. But that from all lucid, shining and illuminated bodies, there is a motion produced to the eye, and, through the eye, to the optic nerve, and so into the brain, by which that apparition of light or colour is effected, is not hard to prove. And first, it is evident that the fire, the only lucid body here on earth, worketh by motion equally every way; insomuch as the motion thereof stopped or inclosed, it is presently extinguished, and no more fire. And farther, that that motion, whereby the fire worketh, is dilatation, and contraction of itself alternately, commonly called scintillation or glowing, is manifest also by experience. From such motion in the fire must needs arise a rejection or casting from itself of that part of the medium which is contiguous to it, whereby that part also rejecteth the next, and so successively one part beateth back the other to the very eye; and in the same manner the exterior part of the eye (the laws of refraction still observed) presseth the interior. Now the interior coat of the eye is nothing else but a piece of the optic nerve, and therefore the motion is still continued thereby into the brain, and by resistance or reaction of the brain, is also a rebound in the optic nerve again, which we not conceiving as motion or rebound from within, think it is without, and call it light; as hath been already shewed by the experience of a stroke. We have no reason to doubt, that the fountain of light, the sun, worketh any other wise than the fire, at least in this matter, and thus all vision hath its original from such motion as is here described. For where there is no light, there is no sight; and therefore colour also must be the same thing with light, as being the effect of lucid bodies: their difference being only

this, that when the light cometh directly from the fountain to the eye, or indirectly by reflection from clean and polite bodies, and such as have no particular motion internal to alter it, we call it light. But when it cometh to the eyes by reflection from uneven, rough, and coarse bodies, or such as are affected with internal motion of their own, that may alter it, then we call it colour; colour and light differing only in this, that the one is pure, the other a perturbed light. By that which hath been said, not only the truth of the third proposition, but also the whole manner of producing light and colour, is apparent.

9. As colour is not inherent in the object, but an effect thereof upon us, caused by such motion in the object, as hath been described: so neither is sound in the thing we hear, but in ourselves. One manifest sign thereof is: that as a man may see, so also he may hear double or treble, by multiplication of echoes, which echoes are sounds as well as the original; and not being in one and the same place, cannot be inherent in the body that maketh them. Nothing can make any thing in itself: the clapper hath not sound in it, but motion, and maketh motion in the internal parts of the bell so the bell hath motion, and not sound. That imparteth motion to the air; and the air hath motion, but not sound. The air imparteth motion by the ear and nerves to the brain; and the brain hath motion but not sound. From the brain it reboundeth back into the nerves outward, and thence it becometh an apparition without, which we call sound. And to proceed to the rest of the senses, it is apparent enough, that the smell and taste of the same thing, are not the same to every man, and therefore are not

in the thing smelt or tasted, but in the men. So likewise the heat we feel from the fire is manifestly in us, and is quite different from the heat that is in the fire. For our heat is pleasure or pain, according as it is extreme or moderate; but in the coal there is no such thing. By this the fourth and last of the propositions is proved (viz.) That as in conception by vision, so also in the conceptions that arise from other senses, the subject of their inherence is not the object, but the sentient.

10. And from thence also it followeth, that whatsoever accidents or qualities our senses make us think there be in the world, they are not there, but are seemings and apparitions only. The things that really are in the world without us, are those motions by which these seemings are caused. And this is the great deception of sense, which also is by sense to be corrected. For as sense telleth me, when I see directly, that the colour seemeth to be in the object; so also sense telleth me, when I see by reflection, that colour is not in the object.

Chapter 3: Of Imagination and the Kinds Thereof

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1. As standing water put into motion by the stroke of a stone, or blast of wind, doth not presently give over moving as soon as the wind ceaseth, or the stone settleth: so neither doth the effect cease which the object hath wrought upon the brain, so soon as ever by turning aside of the organ the object ceaseth to work; that is to say, though the sense be past, the image or conception remaineth; but more obscurely while we are awake, because some object or other continually plieth and soliciteth our eyes, and ears, keeping the mind in a stronger motion, whereby the weaker doth not easily appear. And this obscure conception is that we call PHANTASY or IMAGINATION: imagination being (to define it) conception remaining, and by little and little decaying from and after the act of sense.

2. But when present sense is not, as in SLEEP, there the images remaining after sense (when there be any) as in dreams, are not obscure, but strong and clear, as in sense itself. The reason IS, because that which obscured and made the conceptions weak, namely sense, and present operation of the objects, is removed. For sleep is the privation of the act of sense, (the power remaining) and dreams are the imaginations of them that sleep.

3. The causes of DREAMS (if they be natural) are the actions or violence of the inward parts of a man upon his brain, by which the passages of sense, by sleep benumbed, are restored to their motion. The signs by which this

appeareth to be so, are the differences of dreams proceeding from the different accidents of man's body. Old men being commonly less healthful and less free from inward pains, are thereby more subject to dreams, especially such dreams as be painful: as dreams of lust, or dreams of anger, according as the heart, or other parts within, work more or less upon the brain, by more or less heat. So also the descent of different sorts of phlegm maketh one to dream of different tastes of meats or drinks. And I believe there is a reciprocation of motion from the brain to the vital parts, and back from the vital parts to the brain; whereby not only imagination begetteth motion in those parts; but also motion in those parts begetteth imagination like to that by which it was begotten. If this be true, and that sad imaginations nourish the spleen, then we see also a cause, why a strong spleen reciprocally causeth fearful dreams. And why the effects of lasciviousness may in a dream produce the image of some person that hath caused them. If it were well observed, whether the image of the person in a dream be as obedient to the accidental heat of him that dreameth, as waking his heat is to the person, and if so, then is such motion reciprocal. Another sign that dreams are caused by the action of the inward parts, is the disorder and casual consequence of one conception or image to another: for when we are waking, the antecedent thought or conception introduceth, and is cause of the consequent, as the water followeth a man's finger upon a dry and level table. But in dreams there is commonly no coherence (and when there is, it is by chance), which must proceed from this, that the brain in dreams is not restored to

its motion in every part alike; whereby it cometh to pass, that our thoughts appear like the stars between the flying clouds, not in the order which a man would choose to observe them in, but as the uncertain flight of broken clouds permit.

4. As when the water, or any liquid thing moved at once by divers movements, receiveth one motion compounded of them all; so also the brain or spirits therein, having been stirred by divers objects, composeth an imagination of divers conceptions that appeared singly to the sense. As for example, the sense sheweth us at one time the figure of a mountain, and at another time the colour of gold; but the imagination afterwards hath them both at once in a golden mountain. From the same cause it is, there appear unto us castles in the air, chimeras, and other monsters which are not in rerum natura, but have been conceived by the sense in pieces at several times. And this composition is that which we commonly call FICTION of the mind.

5. There is yet another kind of. imagination, which for clearness contendeth with sense, as well as a dream; and that is, when the action of sense hath been long or vehement: and the experience thereof is more frequent in the sense of seeing, than the rest. An example whereof is, the image remaining before the eye after a steadfast looking upon the sun. Also, those little images that appear before the eyes in the dark (whereof I think every man hath experience, but they most of all, that are timorous or superstitious) are examples of the same. And these, for distinction sake, may be called PHANTASMS.

6. By the senses (which are numbered according to the organs to be five) we take notice (as hath been said already) of the objects without us; and that notice is our conception thereof: but we take notice also some way or other of our conceptions. For when the conception of the same thing cometh again, we take notice that it is again; that is to say, that we have had the same conception before; which is as much as to imagine a thing past; which is impossible to sense, which is only of things present. This therefore may be accounted a sixth sense, but internal, not external, as the rest, and is commonly called REMEMBRANCE.

7. For the manner by which we take notice of a conception past, we are to remember, that in the definition of imagination, it is said to be a conception by little and little decaying, or growing more obscure. An obscure conception is that which representeth the whole object together, but none of the smaller parts by themselves; and as more or fewer parts be represented, so is the conception or representation said to be more or less clear. Seeing then the conception, which when it was first produced by sense, was clear, and represented the parts of the object distinctly; and when it cometh again is obscure, we find missing somewhat that we expected; by which we judge it past and decayed. For example, a man that is present in a foreign city, seeth not only whole streets, but can also distinguish particular houses, and parts of houses; departed thence, he cannot distinguish them so particularly in his mind as he did, some house or turning escaping him; yet is this to remember the city; when afterwards there escapeth him more particulars, this is also to remember, but not so well. In process of time,

the image of the city returneth, but as of a mass of building only, which is almost to have forgotten it. Seeing then remembrance is more or less, as we find more or less obscurity, why may not we well think remembrance to be nothing else but the missing of parts, which every man expecteth should succeed after they have a conception of the whole? To see at great distance of place, and to remember at great distance of time, is to have like conceptions of the thing: for there wanteth distinction of parts in both; the one conception being weak by operation at distance, the other by decay.

8. And from this that hath been said, there followeth, that a man can never know he dreameth; he may dream he doubteth, whether it be a DREAM or no: but the clearness of the imagination representeth every thing with as many parts as doth sense itself, and consequently, he can take notice of nothing but as present; whereas to think he dreameth, is to think those his conceptions past, that is to say, obscurer than they were in the sense: so that he must think them both as clear, and not as clear as sense; which is impossible.

9. From the same ground it proceedeth, that men wonder not in their dreams at places and persons, as they would do waking: for waking, a man would think it strange to be in a place wherein he never was before, and remember nothing of how he came there. But in a dream, there cometh little of that kind into consideration. The clearness of conception in a dream, taketh away distrust, unless the strangeness be excessive, as to think himself fallen from on high without hurt, and then most commonly he awaketh.

10. Nor is it impossible for a man to be so far deceived, as when his dream is past, to think it real: for if he dream of such things as are ordinarily in his mind, and in such order as he useth to do waking, and withal that he laid him down to sleep in the place where he findeth himself when he awaketh (all which may happen) I know no Kriterion or mark by which he can discern whether it were a dream or not, and do therefore the less wonder to hear a man sometimes to tell his dream for a truth, or to take it for a vision.

Chapter 4: Of the Several Kinds of Discursion of the Mind

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1. The succession of conceptions in the mind, their series or consequence of one after another, may be casual and incoherent, as in dreams for the most part; and it may be orderly, as when the former thought introduceth the latter; and this is discourse of the mind. But because the word discourse is commonly taken for the coherence and consequence of words, I will (to avoid equivocation) call it DISCURSION.

2. The cause of the coherence or consequence of one conception to another, is their first coherence, or consequence at that time when they were produced by sense. As for example: from St. Andrew the mind runneth to St. Peter, because their names are read together; from St. Peter to a stone, for the same cause; from stone to foundation, because we see them together; and for the same cause, from foundation to church, from church to people, and from people to tumult. And according to this example, the mind may run almost from any thing to any thing. But as to the sense the conception of cause and effect succeed one another. so may they after sense in the imagination. And for the most part they do so. The cause whereof is the appetite of them, who, having a conception of the end, have next unto it a conception of the next means to that end. As when a man, from the thought of honour to which he hath an appetite, cometh to the thought of wisdom, which is the next means thereto; and from thence

to the thought of study, which is the next means to wisdom, etc.

3. To omit that kind of discursion by which we proceed from any thing to any thing, there are of the other kind divers sorts. As first in the senses: there are certain coherences of conceptions, which we may call RANGING. Examples whereof are: a man's casting his eye upon the ground, to look about for some small thing lost; the hounds casting about at a fault in hunting; and the ranging of spaniels. And herein we take a beginning arbitrarily.

4. Another sort of discursion is, when the appetite giveth a man his beginning, as in the example before adduced: where honour, to which a man hath appetite, maketh him to think upon the next means of attaining it, and that again of the next, &c. And this the Latins call sagacitas, SAGACITY, and we may call it hunting or tracing, as dogs trace the beast by the smell, and men hunt them by their footsteps; or as men hunt after riches, place, or knowledge.

5. There is yet another kind of discursion beginning with appetite to recover something lost, proceeding from the present backward, from the thought of the place where we miss it, to the thought of the place from whence we came last; and from the thought of that, to the thought of a place before, till we have in our mind some place, wherein we had the thing we miss: and this is called REMINISCENCE.

6. The remembrance of the succession of one thing to another, that is, of what was antecedent, and what consequent, and what concomitant, is called an EXPERIMENT; whether the same be made by us voluntarily, as when a man putteth any thing into the fire, to see what