

aspects. In speculation they seem to flow from noble and sublime principles, but in application nothing but false and puerile consequences can be drawn from them.

Is it difficult to discover that our ideas proceed only from our senses? that the things we look on as real and existing are those of which our senses have always rendered us the same testimony? that those which we conceive to have certain existence are those which ever present themselves in the same order? that consequently our ideas, very far from being the causes of things, are only effects, and so far from resembling particular things, become less similar to the objects as they are more general; that at length our mental abstractions are only negative beings, which do not exist even intellectually but by the retrenchment which we make of sensible qualities to real beings.

From hence is it not plain that abstractions can never become principles, neither of existence nor real knowledge? on the contrary, our knowledge can only proceed from the results of properly comparing our sensations. These results are what is termed *experience*, the sole source of all real science. The adoption of every other principle is an abuse, and every