

the animal a general idea of what is common also to the vegetable, that is, the faculty of reproduction.

The general idea then is formed from the whole taken together, which whole being composed of different parts, there is consequently between these parts degrees and links. An insect, in this sense, is something less of an animal than a dog; an oyster still less than an insect; a sea-nettle, or a fresh-water polypus, still less than an oyster; and as nature acts by insensible links, we may find beings which are still less animated than a sea-nettle, or a polypus. Our general ideas are only artificial methods to collect a quantity of objects in the same point of view; and they have, like the artificial methods we shall speak of, the defect of never being able to comprehend the whole. They are likewise opposite to the walk of nature, which is uniform, insensible, and always particular, insomuch that by our endeavouring to comprehend too great a number of particular ideas in one single word, we have no longer a clear idea of what that word conveys; because, the word being received, we imagine that it is a line drawn between the productions of nature; that all above this line is *animal*,
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