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*Some, however, called some*  
**E S S A Y S** *How*

ON THE  
P R I N C I P L E S  
O F  
M O R A L I T Y  
A N D  
N A T U R A L R E L I G I O N .

I N T W O P A R T S .

The S E C O N D E D I T I O N .

With Alterations and Additions.

L O N D O N :

Printed for C. HITCH & L. HAWES, R. & J. DODSLEY,  
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## ADVERTISEMENT.

*IT is proper to acquaint the reader, before he enters on the following essays, that they are not thrown together without connection. The first, by the investigation of a particular fact, is designed to illustrate the nature of man, as a social being. The next considers him as the subject of morality. And as morality supposes freedom of action, this introduces the third essay, which is a disquisition on liberty and necessity. These make the first part of the work. The rest of the essays, ushered in by that on belief, hang upon each other. A plan is prosecuted, in support of the authority of our senses, external and internal; where it is occasionally shown, that our reasonings on some of the most important subjects, rest ultimately upon sense and feeling. This is illustrated in a variety of instances; and from these, the author would gladly hope, that he has thrown new light upon the principles of human knowledge:— All to prepare the way for a proof of the existence and perfections of the Deity, which is the chief aim in this undertaking. The author's manner of thinking, may, in some points, be esteemed bold, and new. But  
freedom*

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*freedom of thought will not displease those who are led, in their inquiries, by the love of truth. To such only he writes: and with such, he will, at least, have the merit of a good aim; of having searched for truth, and endeavoured to promote the cause of virtue and natural religion.*

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P A R T I.



# ESSAY I.

## *Of our ATTACHMENT to OBJECTS of DISTRESS.*

**A** NOTED French critic, treating of poetry and painting, undertakes a subject attempted by others unsuccessfully, which is, to account for the strong attachment we have to objects of distress, imaginary as well as real. “ It is not easy (says he) to account  
“ for the pleasure we take in poetry and painting, which has often a strong resemblance to  
“ affliction, and of which the symptoms are  
“ sometimes the same with those of the most  
“ lively sorrow. The arts of poetry and painting are never more applauded than when they  
“ succeed in giving pain. A secret charm attaches us to representations of this nature, at  
“ the very time our heart, full of anguish, rises  
“ up against its proper pleasure. I dare undertake this paradox, (continues our author), and  
“ to explain the foundation of this sort of pleasure which we have in poetry and painting ;  
“ an undertaking that may appear bold, if not  
“ rash, seeing it promises to account to every  
“ man for what passes in his own breast, and for  
A “ the

## 2 ATTACHMENT TO

“ the secret springs of his approbation and dislike.” Our author is extremely sensible of the difficulty of his subject: and no wonder; for it lies deep in human nature.

LET us attend him in this difficult undertaking. He lays it down as a preliminary, That our wants and necessities are our only motives to action, and that in relieving us from them consists all natural pleasure: in which, by the way, he agrees with Mr Locke, in his chapter of power, sect. 37. and 43. This account of our natural pleasures shall be afterwards examined. What we have at present to attend to, is the following proposition, laid down by our author as fundamental: “ That man, by nature, “ is designed an active being: that inaction, “ whether of body or mind, draws on languor “ and disgust: and that this is a cogent motive “ to fly to any sort of occupation for relief. “ Thus (adds he) we fly by instinct to every “ object that can excite our passions, and keep “ us in agitation, notwithstanding the pain such “ objects often give us, which causes vexatious “ days and sleepless nights: but man suffers “ more by being without passions, than by the “ agitation they occasion.” This is the sum of his first section. In the second he goes on to particular instances. The first he gives is compassion; which makes us dwell upon the miseries and distresses of others, though thereby we  
are

are made to partake of their sufferings ; an impulse that, he observes, is entirely owing to the foregoing principle, which makes us chuse occupation, however painful, rather than be without action. Another is public executions. “ We  
 “ go in crouds (says he) to a spectacle the most  
 “ horrid that man can behold, to see a poor  
 “ wretch broke upon the wheel, burnt alive, or  
 “ his intrails torn out. The more dreadful  
 “ the scene, the more numerous the spectators.  
 “ Yet one might foresee, even without experience,  
 “ rience, that the cruel circumstances of the  
 “ execution, the deep groans and anguish of a  
 “ fellow-creature, must make an impression,  
 “ the pain of which cannot be effaced but by a  
 “ long course of time. But the attraction of  
 “ agitation prevails more than the joint powers  
 “ of reflection and experience.” He goes on to mention the strange delight the Roman people had in the entertainments of the amphitheatre ; criminals exposed to be torn to pieces by wild beasts, and gladiators in troops hired to butcher one another. He takes this occasion to make the following observation upon the English nation. “ So tender-hearted are that people, that  
 “ they observe humanity towards their greatest  
 “ criminals. They allow of no such thing as  
 “ torture ; alledging it better to leave a crime  
 “ unpunished, than to expose an innocent person  
 “ to those torments which are authorised in  
 “ other Christian countries, to extort a confession

#### 4 ATTACHMENT TO

“ fession from the guilty. Yet this people, so  
“ respectful of their kind, have an infinite plea-  
“ sure in prize-fighting, bull-baiting, and such  
“ other savage spectacles.” He concludes with  
showing, that it is this very horror of inaction,  
which makes men every day precipitate them-  
selves into play, and deliver themselves over to  
cards and dice. “ None but fools and sharpers  
“ (says he) are moved to play by hope of gain.  
“ The generality are directed by another mo-  
“ tive. They neglect those diversions where  
“ skill and address are required, chusing rather  
“ to risk their fortunes at games of mere chance,  
“ which keep their minds in continual motion,  
“ and where every throw is decisive.”

THIS is our author's account of the matter fairly stated. It has, I acknowledge, an air of truth ; but the following considerations convince me that it is not solid. In the first place, if the pain of inaction be the motive which carries us to such spectacles as are above mentioned, we must expect to find them frequented by none but those who are oppressed with idleness. But this will not be found the truth of the matter. All sorts of persons flock to such spectacles. Pictures of danger, or of distress, have a secret charm which attracts men from the most serious occupations, and operates equally upon the active and the indolent. In the next place, were there nothing in these spectacles to attract the  
mind,

mind, abstracting from the pain of inaction, there would be no such thing as a preference of one object to another, upon any other ground than that of agitation; and the more the mind was agitated, the greater would be the attraction of the object. But this is contrary to experience. There are many objects of horror and distaste, which agitate the mind exceedingly, that even the idlest fly from. And a more apt instance need not be given, than what our author himself cites from Livy \*; who, speaking of Antiochus Epiphanes, has the following words. *Gladiatorum munus Romanæ consuetudinis, primo majore cum terrore hominum insuetorum ad tale spectaculum, quam uoluptate dedit. Deinde sæpius dando, et familiare oculis gratumque id spectaculum fecit, et armorum studium plebisque juvenum accendit.* Such bloody spectacles behaved undoubtedly to make at first a greater impression than afterwards, when, by reiteration, they were rendered familiar. Yet this circumstance was so far from being an attraction to the Grecians, that it raised in them aversion and horror. Upon the same account, the bear-garden, which is one of the chief entertainments of the English, is held in abhorrence by the French, and other polite nations. It is too savage an entertainment, to be relished by those of a refined taste.

\* Lib. 41.



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IF man be supposed a being, whose only view, in all his actions, is either to attain pleasure, or to avoid pain; it would, upon that supposition, be hard, if not impossible, to give any satisfactory account why we should chuse, with our eyes open, to frequent entertainments which must necessarily give us pain. But when we more attentively examine human nature, we discover many and various impulses to action, independent of pleasure and pain. Let us prosecute this thought, because it may probably lead to a solution of the problem.

WHEN we attend to the emotions raised in us by external objects, or to any of our emotions, we find them greatly diversified. They are strong or weak, distinct or confused, &c. There is no division of emotions more comprehensive than into agreeable or disagreeable. It is unnecessary, and would perhaps be in vain, to search for the cause of these differences. More we cannot say, than that such is the constitution of our nature, so contrived by the Author of all things, in order to answer wise and good purposes.

THERE is another circumstance to be attended to in these emotions; that *affection* enters into some of them, *aversion* into others. To some objects we have an affection, and we desire to possess and enjoy them; other objects  
raise

raise our aversion, and move us to avoid them. No object can move our affection but what is agreeable, nor our aversion but what is disagreeable. Whether it be the effect of every agreeable object to raise affection, we have no occasion at present to inquire. But it is of importance to observe, that many objects are disagreeable, or perhaps rather painful, which raise not aversion in any degree. Objects of horror and terror, loathsome objects, and many others, raise aversion. But there are many emotions or passions, some of them of the most painful sort, which have no aversion in their composition. Grief is a most painful passion, and yet is not accompanied with any degree of aversion. On the contrary, we cling to the object which raises our grief, and love to dwell upon it. Compassion is an instance of the like nature. Objects of distress raise no aversion in us, though they give us pain. Affection always enters into the passion, and consequently desire to afford relief.

IN infancy, appetite and passion are our sole impulses to action. But in the progress of life, when we learn to distinguish the objects around us, as productive of pleasure or pain, we acquire, by degrees, impulses to action of a different sort. Self-love is a strong motive to search about for every thing that may contribute to happiness. Self-love operates by means of reflection and experience; and every object, so  
soon

## § ATTACHMENT TO

soon as discovered to contribute to our happiness, raises in us of course a desire of possessing. Hence it is, that pleasure and pain are the only motives to action, so far as self-love is concerned. But our appetites and passions are not all of them of this nature. These frequently operate by direct impulse, without the intervention of reason, in the same manner as instinct does in brute creatures. As they are not influenced by any sort of reasoning, the view of shunning misery, or acquiring happiness, makes no part of the impulsive motive. It is true, that the gratification of our passions and appetites is agreeable; and it is also true, that, in giving way to a particular appetite, the view of pleasure may, by a reflex act, become an additional motive to the action. But these things must not be confounded with the direct impulse arising from the appetite or passion; which, as I have said, operates blindly, and in the way of instinct, without any view to consequences.

AND to ascertain the distinction betwixt actions directed by self-love, and actions directed by particular appetites and passions, it must be further remarked, that the aim of self-love is always to make us happy, but that other appetites and passions have frequently a very different tendency. This will be plain from induction. Revenge gratified against the man we hate, is agreeable. It is a very different case, where we  
have

have taken offence at a man we love. Friendship will not allow me, however offended, to hurt my friend. "I cannot find in my heart to do him mischief; but I would have him made sensible of the wrong he has done me." Revenge, thus denied a vent, recoils, and preys upon the vitals of the person offended. It displays itself in peevishness and bad humour; which must work and ferment, till time, or acknowledgment of the wrong, carry it off. This sort of revenge is turned against the man himself who is offended; and examples there are of persons in this pettish humour, working great mischief to themselves, in order to make the offenders sensible of the wrong. Thus, no example is more common than of a young woman, disappointed in love, prone to her own misery, and bent to throw herself away upon any worthless man that will ask her the question. My next example will be still more satisfactory. Every one must have observed, that when the passion of grief is at its height, the very nature of it is to shun and fly from every thing which tends to give ease or comfort. In the height of grief, a man rushes on to misery, by a sort of sympathy with the person for whom he is grieved. Why should I be happy when my friend is no more? is the language of this passion. In these circumstances, the man is truly a self-tormentor. And here we have a singular phænomenon in human nature; an appetite after pain, an inclination to render:

render one's self miserable. This goes farther than even self-murder; a crime that is never perpetrated but in order to put an end to misery, when it rises to such an height as to be insupportable.

WE now see how imperfect the description is of human nature, given by Mr Locke, and by our French author. They acknowledge no motive to action, but what arises from self-love; measures laid down to attain pleasure, or to shun pain. Many appetites and passions, with the affection and aversion involved in them, are left entirely out of the system. And yet we may say, with some degree of probability, that we are more frequently influenced by these than by self-love. In this inquiry a discovery is made of great importance to the subject in hand, to wit, a direct appetite or desire, in some instances, after pain. So various is human nature, and so complicated its acting powers, that it is not readily to be taken in at one view.

WE return to our subject, after having unfolded those principles of action with which it is connected. It may be gathered from what is above laid down, that nature, which designed us for society, has linked us together in an intimate manner, by the sympathetic principle, which communicates the joys and sorrow of one to many. We partake the afflictions of our fellows;

lows ; we grieve with them and for them ; and, in many instances, their misfortunes affect us equally with our own. Let it not therefore appear surprizing, that, instead of shunning objects of misery, we chuse to dwell upon them ; for this is truly as natural as indulging grief for our own misfortunes. And it must be observed at the same time, that this is wisely ordered by providence : were the social affections mixed with any degree of aversion, even when we suffer under them, we should be inclined, upon the first notice of an object of distress, to drive it from our sight and mind, instead of affording relief.

NOR must we judge of this principle as any way vicious or faulty : for besides that it is the great cement of human society, we ought to consider, that, as no state is exempt from misfortunes, mutual sympathy must greatly promote the security and happiness of mankind. That the prosperity and preservation of each individual should be the care of many, tends more to happiness in general, than that each man, as the single inhabitant of a desert island, should be left to stand or fall by himself, without prospect of regard, or assistance from others. Nor is this all. When we consider our own character and actions in a reflex view, we cannot help approving this tenderness and sympathy in our nature. We are pleased with ourselves for being so constituted ;

constituted: we are conscious of inward merit; and this is a continual source of satisfaction.

To open this subject a little more, it must be observed, that naturally we have a strong desire to be acquainted with the history of others. We judge of their actions, approve or disapprove, condemn or acquit; and in this the busy mind has a wonderful delight. Nay, we go farther, We enter deep into their concerns, take a side; we partake of joys and distresses, with those we favour, and show a proportional aversion to others. This turn of mind makes history, novels, and plays, the most universal and favourite entertainments. It is natural to man as a sociable creature; and we may venture to affirm, that the most sociable have the greatest share of this sort of curiosity, and the strongest attachment to such entertainments.

TRAGEDY is an imitation or representation of human characters and actions. It is a feigned history; which generally makes a stronger impression than what is real; because, if it be a work of genius, incidents will be chosen to make the deepest impressions, and will be so conducted, as to keep the mind in continual suspense and agitation, beyond what commonly happens in real life. By a good tragedy, all the social passions are excited. The first scene is scarce ended before we are engaged. We take

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a sudden affection to some of the personages represented. We come to be attached to them as to our bosom-friends, and we hope and fear for them, as if the whole were a true history, instead of a fable.

To a dry philosopher, unacquainted with theatrical entertainments, it may appear surprising, that imitation should have such an effect upon the mind, and that the want of truth and reality should not prevent the operation of our passions. But whatever may be the physical cause, one thing is evident, that this aptitude of the mind of man to receive impressions from feigned, as well as from real objects, contributes to the noblest purposes of life. Nothing contributes so much to improve the mind, and confirm it in virtue, as being continually employed in surveying the actions of others, entering into the concerns of the virtuous, approving their conduct, condemning vice, and showing an abhorrence at it; for the mind acquires strength by exercise, as well as the body. But were this sort of discipline confined to scenes in real life, the generality of men would be little the better for it, because such scenes rarely occur. They are not frequent even in history. But in compositions where liberty is allowed of fiction, it must be want of genius, if the mind be not sufficiently exercised, till it acquire the greatest sensibility, and the most confirmed habits of virtue.

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THUS, tragedy engages our passions, not less than true history. Friendship, concern for the virtuous, abhorrence of the vitious, compassion, hope, fear, and the whole train of the social passions, are roused and exercised by both of them equally.

THIS may appear to be a fair account of the attachment we have to theatrical entertainments : but when the subject is more narrowly examined, some difficulties occur, to which the principles above laid down will scarce afford a satisfactory answer. It is not wonderful that young people flock to such entertainments. The love of novelty, desire of occupation, beauty of action, are strong attractions : and if one be once engaged, of whatever age, by entering into the interests of the personages represented, the attraction becomes strong beyond measure, and the story must be followed out, whatever be the consequence. The foresight of running into grief and affliction will not disengage. But we generally become wise by experience ; and it may appear surprising, when distress is the never-failing effect of such entertainments, that persons of riper judgment should not shun them altogether. Doth self-love lie asleep in this case, which is for ordinary so active a principle ? When one considers the matter *a priori*, he will not hesitate to draw a conclusion to this purpose, That as repeated experience must, at the long-run,  
make

make us wise enough to keep out of harm's way ; deep tragedies, for that reason, will be little frequented by persons of reflection. Yet the contrary is true in fact ; the deepest tragedies being the most frequented by persons of all ages, by those especially of delicate feelings, upon whom the strongest impressions are made. A man of that character, who has scarce got the better of the deep distress he was thrown into the night before by a well-acted tragedy, does, in his closet, coolly and deliberately resolve to go to the next entertainment of the kind, without feeling the smallest obstruction from self-love.

THIS leads to a speculation, perhaps one of the most curious that belongs to human nature. Contrary to what is generally understood, the foregoing speculation affords a palpable proof, that even self-love does not always operate to avoid pain and distress. In examining how this is brought about, there will be discovered an admirable contrivance in human nature, to give free scope to the social affections. Keeping in view what is above laid down, that of the painful passions some are accompanied with aversion, some with affection ; we find, upon the strictest examination, that those painful passions, which, in the direct feeling, are free from any degree of aversion, have as little of it in the reflex act. Or, to express the thing more familiarly, when we reflect upon the pain we

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have

have suffered by our concern for others, there is no degree of aversion mixed with the reflection, more than with the pain itself, which is the immediate effect of the object. For illustration's sake, let us compare the pain which arises from compassion with any bodily pain. Cutting one's flesh is not only accompanied with strong aversion in the direct feeling, but with an aversion equally strong in reflecting upon the action afterwards. We feel no such aversion in reflecting upon the mental pains above described. On the contrary, when we reflect upon the pain which the misfortune of a friend gave us, the reflection is accompanied with an eminent degree of satisfaction. We approve ourselves for suffering with our friend, value ourselves the more for that suffering, and are ready to undergo cheerfully the like distress upon the like occasion.

WHEN we examine those particular passions, which, though painful, are yet accompanied with no aversion ; we find they are all of the social kind, arising from that eminent principle of sympathy, which is the cement of human society. The social passions are accompanied with appetite for indulgence, when they give us pain, not less than when they give us pleasure. We submit willingly to such painful passions, and reckon it no hardship to suffer under them. In being thus constituted, we have the consciousness of regularity and order, and that it is *right* and

and *meet* we should suffer after this manner. Thus the moral affections, even such of them as produce pain, are none of them attended with any degree of aversion, not even in reflecting upon the distress they often bring us under. And this observation tends to set the moral affections in a very distinguished point of view, in opposition to those that are either malevolent, or merely selfish.

MANY and various are the springs of action in human nature, and not one more admirable than what is now unfolded. Sympathy is an illustrious principle, which connects persons in society by ties stronger than those of blood. Yet compassion, the child of sympathy, is a painful emotion; and were it accompanied with any degree of aversion, even in reflecting upon the distress it occasions, after the distress is over, that aversion would, by degrees, blunt the passion, and at length cure us of what we would be apt to reckon a weakness or disease. But the author of our nature hath not left his work imperfect. He has given us this noble principle entire, without a counterbalance, so as to have a vigorous and universal operation. Far from having any aversion to pain, occasioned by the social principle, we reflect upon such pain with satisfaction, and are willing to submit to it upon all occasions with cheerfulness and heart-liking, just as much as if it were a real pleasure.

AND now the cause of the attachment we have to tragedy is fairly laid open, and comes out in the strongest light. The social passions, put in motion by it, are often the occasion of distress to the spectators. But our nature is so happily constituted, that distress occasioned by the exercise of the social passions, is not an object of the smallest aversion to us, even when we reflect coolly and deliberately upon it. Self-love does not carry us to shun affliction of this sort. On the contrary, we are so framed, as willingly and cheerfully to submit to it upon all occasions, as if it were a real and substantial good. And, thus, tragedy is allowed to seize the mind with all the different charms which arise from the exercise of the social passions, without the least obstacle from self-love.

HAD our author reflected on the sympathizing principle, by which we are led, as by a secret charm, to partake of the miseries of others, he would have had no occasion of recurring to so imperfect a principle as that of aversion to inaction, to explain this seeming paradox, that a man should voluntarily chuse to give himself pain. Without entering deep into philosophy, he might have had hints in abundance from common life to explain it. In every corner, persons are to be met with of such a sympathizing temper, as to chuse to spend their lives with the diseased and distressed. They partake with them  
in

in their afflictions, enter heartily into their concerns, and sigh and groan with them. These pass their lives in sadness and despondency, without having any other satisfaction than what arises upon the reflection of having done their duty.

AND if this account of the matter be just, we may be assured, that those who are most compassionate in their temper, will be fondest of tragedy, which affords them a large field for indulging the passion. And indeed admirable are the effects brought about by this means: for passions, as they gather strength by indulgence, so they decay by want of exercise. Persons in prosperity, unacquainted with distress and misery, are apt to grow hard-hearted. Tragedy is an admirable resource in such a case. It serves to humanize the temper, by supplying feigned objects of pity, which have nearly the same effect to exercise the passion that real objects have. And thus it is that we are carried by a natural impulse to deal deep in affliction, occasioned by representations of feigned misfortunes; and the passion of pity alone would throng such representations, were there nothing else to attract the mind, or to afford satisfaction.

IT is owing to curiosity, that public executions are so much frequented. Sensible people endeavour to correct an appetite, which, upon indulgence,

dulgence, gives pain and aversion, and, upon reflection, is attended with no degree of self-approbation. Hence it is, that such spectacles are the entertainment of the vulgar chiefly, who allow themselves blindly to be led by the present instinct, with little attention whether it contribute to their good or not.

WITH respect to prize-fighting and gladiatorial shews, nothing animates and inspires us more than examples of courage and bravery. We catch the spirit of the actor, and turn bold and intrepid as he appears to be. On the other hand, we enter into the distresses of the vanquished, and have a sympathy for them in proportion to the gallantry of their behaviour. No wonder, then, that such shews are frequented by persons of the best taste. We are led by the same principle, that makes us fond of perusing the lives of heroes and of conquerors. And it may be observed by the by, that such spectacles have an admirable good effect in training up the youth to boldness and resolution. In this, therefore, I see not that foreigners have reason to condemn the English taste. Spectacles of this sort deserve encouragement from the state, and to be made an object of public policy.

As for gaming, I cannot bring myself to think that there is any pleasure in having the mind kept in suspense, and as it were upon the rack, which

which must be the case of those who venture their money at games of hazard. Inaction and idleness are not by far so hard to bear. I am satisfied that the love of money is at the bottom. Nor is it a solid objection, That people will neglect games of skill and address, to venture their money at hazard ; for this may be owing to indolence, diffidence, or impatience. There is indeed a curious speculation with regard to this article of gaming, that pleasure and pain attend good and bad success at play, independent of the money lost or win. It is a plain case, that good luck raises our spirits, as bad luck depresses them, without regard to consequences : and it seems extremely clear, that our concern at game, when we play for trifles, is owing to this very thing. What may be the root of this affection, is not so obvious. But as it is not necessarily connected with our present theme, I leave it to be investigated by others.

E S S A Y





## E S S A Y II.

### *Of the* FOUNDATION *and* PRINCIPLES *of the* LAW of NATURE.

#### I N T R O D U C T I O N.

**S**UPERFICIAL knowledge produces the bold-est adventurers, because it gives no check to the imagination, when fired by a new thought. Shallow writers lay down plans, contrive models, and are hurried on to execution, by the pleasure of novelty, without considering whether, after all, there be any solid foundation to support the spacious edifice. It redounds not a little to the honour of some late inquirers after truth, that, subduing this bent of nature, they have submitted to the slow and more painful method of facts and experiments; a method that has been applied to natural philosophy with great success. The accurate Locke, in the science of logics, has pursued the same method, and has been followed by several ingenious writers. The mistress-science alone is neglected; and it seems hard that less deference should be paid to her than to her hand-maids. Every author upon morals writes as if it were his privilege to mould this science according to his own taste and fancy. Regulations for human  
man

man conduct are daily framed, without the least consideration, whether they arise out of human nature, or can be accommodated to it. And hence many airy systems, that relate not more to man, than to any other being. Authors of a warm imagination, and benevolent temper, exalt man to the angelic nature, and compose laws for his conduct, so refined as to be far above the reach of humanity. Others of a contrary disposition, forcing down all men to a level with the very lowest of their kind, assign them laws more suitable to brutes than to rational beings. In abstract science, philosophers may more innocently indulge their fancies. The worst that can happen is, to mislead us in matters where error has little influence on practice. But they who deal in moral philosophy ought to be cautious; for their errors seldom fail to have a bad tendency. The exalting of nature above its standard, is apt to disgust the mind, conscious of its weakness, and of its inability to attain such an uncommon degree of perfection. The debasing of nature tends to break the balance of the affections, by adding weight to the selfish and irregular appetites. A cruel effect this, but not the only bad one. The many clashing opinions about morality are apt to tempt readers who have any hollowness of heart, to shake off all principles, and to give way to every appetite as it comes uppermost: and then adieu to a just tenor of life, and consistency of conduct.

THESE

THESE considerations give the author of this essay a just concern to proceed with the utmost circumspection in his inquiries, and to try his conclusions by their true touchstone, that of facts and experiments. Had this method been strictly followed, the world would not have been perplexed with that variety of inconsistent systems, which unhappily have rendered morality a difficult and intricate science. An attempt to restore it to its original simplicity and authority, must be approved, however short one falls in the execution. Writers differ about the origin of the laws of nature, and they differ about the laws themselves. It will perhaps be found, that, about the former, there is less difference in reality than in appearance. It were to be wished, that the different opinions about the latter could be as happily reconciled. But as the author acknowledges this to be above his reach, he must take up with a less agreeable task; which is, to attempt a plan of the laws of nature, drawn from their proper source, without regarding authority.

C

C H A P.

## C H A P. I.

*Of the FOUNDATION of the LAW of NATURE.*

**I**N searching for the foundation of the laws of our nature, the following reflections readily occur. In the first place, two things cannot be more intimately connected than a being and its actions: for the connection is that of cause and effect. Such as the being is, such must its actions be. In the next place, the several classes into which nature has distributed living creatures, are not more distinguishable by an external form, than by an internal constitution, which manifests itself in a certain uniformity of conduct, peculiar to each species. In the third place, any action conformable to the common nature of the species, is considered by us as regular and good. It is according to order, and according to nature. But if there exist a being, with a constitution different from that of its kind, the actions of this being, though conformable to its own peculiar constitution, will, to us, appear whimsical and disorderly. We shall have a feeling of disgust, as if we saw a man with two heads or four hands. These reflections lead us to the foundation of the laws of our nature. They are to be derived from the common nature of man, of which every person partakes who is not a monster.

As

As the foregoing observations make the groundwork of all morality, it may not be improper to enlarge a little upon them. Looking around, we find creatures of very different kinds, both as to their external and internal constitutions. Each species having a peculiar nature, ought to have a peculiar rule of action resulting from its nature. We find this to hold in fact; and it is extremely agreeable to observe, how accurately the laws of each species are adjusted to the external frame of the individuals which compose it, and to the circumstances in which they are placed, so as to procure the conveniencies of life in the best manner, and to produce regularity and consistency of conduct. To give but one instance: The laws which govern sociable creatures, differ widely from those which govern the savage and solitary. Among solitary creatures, who have no mutual connection, there is nothing more natural, or more orderly, than to make food one of another. But for creatures in society to live after this manner, behoved to be the effect of jarring and inconsistent principles. No such disorderly appearance is discovered upon the face of this globe. There is, as above observed, a harmony betwixt the internal and external constitution of the several classes of animals; and this harmony obtains so universally, as to afford a delightful prospect of deep design, effectively carried into execution. The common nature of every class of beings is perceived by us

as perfect; and if, in any instance, a particular being swerve from the common nature of its kind, the action, upon that account, is accompanied with a sense of disorder and wrong. In a word, it is according to order, that the different sorts of living creatures should be governed by laws adapted to their peculiar nature. We consider it as fit and proper that it should be so; and it is a beautiful scene to find creatures acting according to their nature, and thereby acting uniformly, and according to a just tenor of life.

THE force of this reasoning cannot, at any rate, be resisted by those who admit of final causes. We make no difficulty to pronounce, that a species of beings are made for such and such an end, who are of such and such a nature. A lion is made to purchase the means of life by his claws. Why? because such is his nature and constitution. A man is made to purchase the means of life by the help of others, in society. Why? because, from the constitution both of his body and mind, he cannot live comfortably but in society. It is thus we discover for what end we were designed by nature, or the author of nature. And the same chain of reasoning points out to us the laws by which we ought to regulate our actions: for acting according to nature, is acting so as to answer the end of our creation.

C H A P.

## C H A P. II.

*Of the MORAL SENSE.*

**H**AVING shown that the nature of man is the foundation of the laws that ought to govern his actions, it will be necessary, with all possible accuracy, to trace out human nature, so far as regards the present subject. If we can happily accomplish this part of our undertaking, it will be easy, in the synthetical method, to deduce the laws which ought to regulate our conduct. And we shall examine, in the first place, after what manner we are related to beings and things around us: for this speculation will lead to the point in view.

As we are placed in a great world, surrounded with beings and things, some beneficial, some hurtful; we are so constituted, that scarce any object is indifferent to us. It either gives pleasure or pain. Sounds, tastes, and smells, are either agreeable or disagreeable. This is the most of all remarkable in the objects of sight, which affect us in a more lively manner than the objects of any other external sense. Thus, a spreading oak, a verdant plain, a large river, are objects which afford great delight. A rotten carcase, a distorted figure, create aversion, which, in some cases, goes the length of horror.



WITH regard to objects of sight, whatever gives pleasure, is said to be *beautiful*; whatever gives pain, is said to be *ugly*. The terms *beauty* and *ugliness*, in their original signification, are confined to objects of sight. And indeed such objects, being more highly agreeable or disagreeable than others, deserve well to be distinguished by a proper name. But though this be the proper meaning of the terms *beauty* and *ugliness*; yet, as it happens with words which convey a more lively idea than ordinary, the terms are applied in a figurative sense to almost every thing which carries a high relish or disgust, where these sensations have not a proper name of their own. Thus, we talk of a beautiful theorem, a beautiful thought, and a beautiful passage in music. And this way of speaking has, by common use, become so familiar, that it is scarce reckoned a figurative expression.

OBJECTS considered simply as existing, without relation to any end proposed, or any designing agent, are to be placed in the lowest rank or order with respect to beauty and ugliness. But when external objects, such as works of art, are considered with relation to some end proposed, we feel a higher degree of pleasure or pain. Thus, a building regular in all its parts, pleases the eye upon the very first view: but considered as a house for dwelling in, which is the end proposed, it pleases still more, supposing it  
to

to be well fitted to its end. A similar sensation arises in observing the operations of a well-ordered state, where the parts are nicely adjusted to the ends of security and happiness.

THIS perception of beauty, in works of art or design, which is produced not barely by a sight of the object, but by viewing the object in a certain light, as fitted to some use, and as related to some end, includes in it what is termed *approbation*: for approbation, when applied to works of art, means precisely our being pleased with them, or conceiving them beautiful in the view of being fitted to their end. *Approbation* and *disapprobation* do not apply to the first or lowest class of beautiful and ugly objects. To say that we approve a sweet taste, or a flowing river, is really saying no more, than barely that we are pleased with such objects. But the term is justly applied to works of art, because it means more than being pleased with such an object merely as existing. It imports a peculiar beauty, which is perceived, upon considering the object as fitted to the use intended.

IT must be further observed, to avoid obscurity, that the beauty which arises from the relation of an object to its end, is independent of the end itself, whether good or bad, whether beneficial or hurtful: for the perception arises from

from considering its fitness to the end proposed, whatever that end be.

WHEN we take the end itself under consideration, there is discovered a beauty or ugliness of a higher kind than the two former. A beneficial end proposed, strikes us with a very peculiar pleasure: and approbation belongs also to this feeling. Thus, the mechanism of a ship is beautiful, in the view of means well fitted to an end. But the end itself, of carrying on commerce, and procuring so many conveniences to mankind, exalts the object, and heightens our approbation and pleasure. By an end, I mean that to which any thing is fitted, which it serves to procure and bring about, whether it be an ultimate end, or subordinate to something farther. Hence, what is considered as an end in one view, may be considered as a means in another. But so far as it is considered as an end, the degree of its beauty depends upon the degree of its usefulness. Approbation, in many instances, terminates upon the thing itself, abstracted from the intention of an agent. This intention; as good or bad, coming into view, gives rise to a species of beauty or deformity, different from those above set forth; as shall be presently explained. Let it be only kept in view, that as the end or use of a thing is an object of greater dignity and importance than the means, the approbation bestowed on the former

former rises higher than that bestowed on the latter.

THESE three orders of beauty may be blended together in many different ways, to have very different effects. If an object in itself beautiful, be ill fitted to its end, it will, upon the whole, be disagreeable. This may be exemplified, in a house, regular in its architecture, and beautiful to the eye, but incommodious for dwelling. If there be in an object an aptitude to a bad end, it will, upon the whole, be disagreeable, though it have the second modification of beauty in the greatest perfection. A constitution of government, formed with the most perfect art for enslaving the people, may be an instance of this. If the end proposed be good, but the object not well fitted to the end, it will be beautiful or ugly, as the goodness of the end, or unfitness of the means, are prevalent. Of this instances will occur at first view, without being suggested.

THE foregoing modifications of beauty and deformity, apply to all objects, animate and inanimate. A voluntary agent produceth a peculiar species of beauty and deformity, which may readily be distinguished from all others. The actions of living creatures are more interesting than the actions of matter. The instincts, and principles of action of the former, give us more  
delight,

delight, than the blind powers of the latter ; or, in other words, are more beautiful. No one can doubt of this fact, who is in any degree conversant with the poets. In Homer every thing lives. Even darts and arrows are endued with voluntary motion. And we are sensible, that nothing animates a poem more than the frequent use of this figure.

HENCE a new circumstance in the beauty and deformity of actions, considered as proceeding from intention, deliberation, and choice. This circumstance, which is of the utmost importance in the science of morals, concerns chiefly human actions : for we discover little of intention deliberation and choice, in the actions of inferior creatures. Human actions are not only agreeable or disagreeable, beautiful or deformed, in the different views above mentioned, but are further distinguished in our perception of them, as *fit*, *right*, and *meet* to be done, or as *unfit*, *unmeet*, and *wrong* to be done. These are simple perceptions, capable of no definition, and which cannot otherways be explained, than by making use of the words that are appropriated to them. But let any man attentively examine what passeth in his mind, when the object of his thought is an action proceeding from deliberate intention, and he will soon discover the meaning of these words, and the perceptions which they denote. Let him but attend to a  
deliberate

deliberate action, suggested by filial piety, or suggested by gratitude; such action will not only be agreeable to him, and appear beautiful, but will be agreeable and beautiful, as *fit*, *right*, and *meet* to be done. He will approve the action in that quality, and he will approve the actor for having done his duty. This distinguishing circumstance intitles the beauty and deformity of human actions to peculiar names: they are termed *moral beauty* and *moral deformity*. Hence the *morality* and *immorality* of human actions; and the power or faculty by which we perceive this difference among actions, passeth under the name of the *moral sense*.

It is but a superficial account which is given of morality by most writers, that it depends upon approbation and disapprobation. For it is evident, that these terms are applicable to works of art, and to objects beneficial and hurtful, as well as to morality. It ought further to have been observed, that the approbation or disapprobation of actions, are very distinguishable from what relate to the objects now mentioned. Some actions are approved as good, and as fit, right, and meet to be done; others are disapproved, as bad and unfit, unmeet and wrong to be done. In the one case, we approve the actor as a good man; in the other, disapprove him as a bad man. These perceptions apply not to objects as fitted to an end, nor even to the end itself,  
except

except as proceeding from deliberate intention. When a piece of work is well executed, we approve the artificer for his skill, not for his goodness. Several things, inanimate as well as animate, serve to extreme good ends. We approve these ends as useful in themselves, but not as morally fit and right, where they are not considered as the result of intention.

OF all objects whatever, human actions are the most highly delightful or disgusting, and possess the highest degree of beauty or deformity. In these every circumstance concurs : the fitness or unfitness of the means ; the goodness or badness of the end ; the intention of the actor ; which gives them the peculiar character of *fit*, *right*, and *meet*, or *unfit*, *wrong*, and *unmeet*.

THUS we find the nature of man so constituted, as to approve certain actions, and to disapprove others ; to consider some actions as *fit*, *right*, and *meet* to be done, and to consider others as *unfit*, *unmeet*, and *wrong*. What distinguisheth actions, to make them objects of the one or the other perception, will be explained in the following chapter. And with regard to some of our actions, another circumstance may perhaps be discovered, different from any that have been mentioned, which will be a foundation for the well-known terms of *duty* and *obligation*, and consequently for a rule of conduct,

conduct, that, in the strictest sense, may be termed a law. But at present it is sufficient to have explained in general, that we are so constituted, as to perceive a right and wrong in actions. And this is what strongly characterises the laws which govern the actions of mankind. With regard to all other beings, we have no *data* to discover the laws of their nature, other than their frame and constitution. We have the same *data* to discover the laws of our own nature. We have, over and above, a peculiar sense of approbation or disapprobation, to point out to us what we ought to do, and what we ought not to do. And one thing extremely remarkable will be explained afterwards, that the laws which are fitted to the nature of man, and to his external circumstances, are the same which we approve by the moral sense.

D

C H A P.



## C H A P. III.

*Of DUTY and OBLIGATION.*

**T**HOUGH these terms are of the utmost importance in morals, I know not that any author hath attempted to explain them, by pointing out those principles or perceptions which they express. This defect I shall endeavour to supply, by tracing these terms to their proper source, without which the system of morals cannot be complete, because these terms point out to us the most precise and essential branch of morality.

LORD Shaftesbury, to whom the world is much indebted for his inestimable writings, has clearly and convincingly made out, "that virtue is the good, and vice the ill of every one." But he has not proved virtue to be our duty, otherways than by showing it to be our interest; which comes not up to the idea of duty. For this term plainly implies somewhat indispensable in our conduct; what we ought to do, what we ought to submit to. Now, a man may be considered as foolish, for acting against his interest; but he cannot be considered as wicked or vicious. His Lordship indeed, in his essay upon  
virtue

virtue \*, approaches to an explanation of duty and obligation, by asserting the subordinacy of the self affections to the social. But though he states this as a proposition to be made out, he drops it in the after part of his work, and never again brings it into view.

HUTCHESON, in his essay upon beauty and virtue †, founds the morality of actions on a certain quality of actions, which procures approbation and love to the agent. But this account of morality is imperfect, because it scarce includes justice, or any thing which may be called duty. The man who, confining himself strictly to duty, is true to his word, and avoids harming others, is a just and moral man; is intitled to some share of esteem; but will never be the object of love or friendship. He must show a disposition to the good of mankind, of his friends at least, and neighbours; he must exert acts of humanity and benevolence, before he can hope to procure the affection of others.

BUT it is chiefly to be observed, that, in this account of morality, the terms *right*, *obligation*, *duty*, *ought* and *should*, have no distinct meaning; which shows, that the entire foundation of morality is not taken in by this author. It is true, that, towards the close of his work, he

\* Page 98.

† Page 101.

attempts to explain the meaning of the term *obligation*. But as criticizing upon authors, those especially who have promoted the cause of virtue, is not an agreeable task; I would not chuse to spend time, in showing that he is unsuccessful in his attempt. The slightest attention to the subject will make it evident. For his whole account of obligation is no more than, either “a  
 “ motive from self-interest, sufficient to deter-  
 “ mine all those who duly consider it, to a cer-  
 “ tain course of action;” which surely is not  
 moral obligation: or “a determination, with-  
 “ out regard to our own interest, to approve  
 “ actions, and to perform them; which deter-  
 “ mination shall also make us displeas'd with  
 “ ourselves, and uneasy upon having acted con-  
 “ trary to it;” in which sense, he says, there  
 is naturally an obligation upon all men to bene-  
 volence. But this account falls far short of the  
 true idea of obligation; because it makes no dis-  
 tinction betwixt it and that simple approbation  
 of the moral sense, which can be applied to  
 heroism, magnanimity, generosity, and other  
 exalted virtues, as well as to justice. Duty  
 however belongs to the latter only; and no  
 man reckons himself under an obligation to per-  
 form any action that belongs to the former.

NEITHER is the author of the treatise upon  
 human nature more successful, when he endea-  
 vours to resolve the moral sense into pure sym-  
 pathy

phy\*. According to this author, there is no more in morality, but approving or disapproving an action, after we discover, by reflection, that it tends to the good or hurt of society. This would be by far too faint a principle to control our irregular appetites and passions. It would scarce be sufficient to restrain us from incroaching upon our friends and neighbours; and, with regard to strangers, would be the weakest of all restraints. We shall, by and by, show, that morality has a more solid foundation. In the mean time, it is of importance to observe, that, upon this author's system, as well as Hutcheson's, the noted terms of *duty*, *obligation*, *ought* and *should*, &c. are perfectly unintelligible.

WE shall now proceed to explain these terms, by pointing out the perceptions which they express. And, in performing this task, there will be discovered a wonderful and beautiful contrivance of the author of our nature, to give authority to morality, by putting the self affections in a due subordination to the social. The moral sense has, in part, been explained above; that by it we perceive some actions, as being *fit*, *right*, and *meet* to be done, and others, as being *unfit*, *unmeet*, and *wrong*. When this observation is applied to particulars, it is an evident fact, that we have a sense of *fitness* in kindly

\* Vol. 3. part 3.

and beneficent actions; we approve ourselves and others for performing actions of this kind: as, on the other hand, we disapprove the unsofiable, peevish, and hard-hearted. But in one set of actions, there is an additional circumstance which is regarded by the moral sense. Actions directed against others, by which they are harmed in their persons, in their fame, or in their goods, are the objects of a peculiar perception. They are perceived not only as *unfit* to be done, but as absolutely *wrong* to be done, and what, upon no account, we *ought* to do. What is here asserted, is a matter of fact, which can admit of no other proof than an appeal to every man's own perceptions. Lay prejudice aside, and give fair play to what passes in the mind. I ask no other concession. There is no man, however irregular in his life and manners, however poisoned by a wrong education, but must be sensible of this fact. And indeed the words which are to be found in all languages, and which are perfectly understood in the communication of sentiments, are an evident demonstration of it. *Duty*, *obligation*, *ought* and *should*, in their common meaning, would be empty sounds, unless upon supposition of such a perception.

THE case is the same with regard to gratitude to benefactors, and performing of engagements. We perceive these to be our *duty* in the strictest sense,

sense, and what we are indispensably *obliged* to. We do not consider them as in any degree under our own power. We have the consciousness of necessity, and of being bound and tied to performance, as if we were under some external compulsion.

IT is proper here to be remarked, that benevolent and generous actions are not objects of this peculiar sense. Hence, such actions, though considered as *fit* and *right* to be done, are not however considered to be our *duty*, but as virtuous actions beyond what is strictly our duty. Benevolence and generosity are more beautiful, and more attractive of love and esteem, than justice. Yet, not being so necessary to the support of society, they are left upon the general footing of approbatory pleasure; while justice, faith, truth, without which society could not at all subsist, are objects of the foregoing peculiar sense, to take away all shadow of liberty, and to put us under a necessity of performance.

DR Butler, a manly and acute writer, hath gone farther than any other, to assign a just foundation for moral duty. He considers conscience or reflection \*, “as one principle of action, which, compared with the rest as they stand together in the nature of man, plainly

\* Preface to the later editions of his sermons.

“ bears

“ bears upon it marks of authority over all the  
“ rest, and claims the absolute direction of them  
“ all, to allow or forbid their gratification.”  
And his proof of this proposition is, “ that a  
“ disapprobation of reflection is in itself a prin-  
“ ciple manifestly superior to a mere propen-  
“ sion.” Had this admirable writer handled the  
subject more professedly than he had occasion to  
do in a preface, it is more than likely he would  
have put it in a clear light. But he has not  
said enough to afford that light the subject is ca-  
pable of. For it may be observed, in the first  
place, that a disapprobation of reflection is far  
from being the whole of the matter. Such dis-  
approbation is applied to moroseness, selfishness,  
and many other partial affections, which are,  
however, not considered in a strict sense as con-  
trary to our duty. And it may be doubted,  
whether a disapprobation of reflection be, in e-  
very case, a principle superior to a mere propen-  
sion. We disapprove a man who neglects his  
private affairs, and gives himself up to love, hunt-  
ing, or any other amusement: nay, he disapproves  
himself. Yet from this we cannot fairly con-  
clude, that he is guilty of any breach of duty,  
or that it is unlawful for him to follow his pro-  
pension. We may observe, in the next place,  
what will be afterwards explained, that con-  
science, or the moral sense, is none of our prin-  
ciples of action, but their guide and director. It  
is still of greater importance to observe, that the  
authority

authority of conscience does not consist merely in an act of reflection. It arises from a direct perception, which we have upon presenting the object, without the intervention of any sort of reflection. And the authority lies in this circumstance, that we perceive the action to be our duty, and what we are indispensably bound to perform. It is in this manner that the moral sense, with regard to some actions, plainly bears upon it the marks of authority over all our appetites and passions. It is the voice of God within us which commands our strictest obedience, just as much as when his will is declared by express revelation.

WHAT is above laid down is an analysis of the moral sense, but not the whole of it. A very important branch still remains to be unfolded. And, indeed, the more we search into the works of nature, the more opportunity there is to admire the wisdom and goodness of the sovereign architect. In the matters above mentioned, performing of promises, gratitude, and abstaining from harming others, we have not only the peculiar sense of duty and obligation: in transgressing these duties, we have not only the sense of vice and wickedness, but we have further the sense of merited punishment, and dread of its being inflicted upon us. This dread may be but slight in the more venial transgressions. But, in crimes of a deep dye, it rises to a degree  
of



of anguish and despair. Hence that remorse of conscience, the most severe of all tortures, which histories are full of, upon the commission of certain crimes. This dread of merited punishment operates for the most part so strongly upon the imagination, that every unusual accident, every extraordinary misfortune, is by the criminal judged to be a punishment purposely inflicted upon him. During prosperity, he makes a shift to blunt the stings of his conscience. But no sooner does he fall into distress, or into any depression of mind, than his conscience lays fast hold of him: his crime stares him in the face; and every accidental misfortune is converted into a real punishment. “ And they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us; and we would not hear: therefore is this distress come upon us. And Reuben answered them, saying, Spake I not unto you, saying, Do not sin against the child; and ye would not hear? therefore behold also, his blood is required \*.”

ONE material circumstance is here to be remarked, which widens the difference still more betwixt the primary and secondary virtues. As justice, and the other primary virtues, are more essential to society, than generosity, benevolence,

\* Genesis xlii. 21. 22.

or any other secondary virtue, they are likewise more universal. Friendship, generosity, softness of manners, form peculiar characters, and serve to distinguish one man from another. But the sense of justice, and of the other primary virtues, is universal. It belongs to man as such. Though it exists in very different degrees of strength, there perhaps never was a human creature absolutely void of it. And it makes a delightful appearance in the human constitution, that even where this sense is weak, as it is in some individuals, it notwithstanding retains its authority as the director of their conduct. If there be any sense of justice, or of abstaining from injury, it must distinguish right from wrong, what we *ought* to do from what we *ought not* to do ; and, by that very distinguishing faculty, justly claims to be our guide and governor. This consideration may serve to justify human laws, which make no distinction among men, as endued with a stronger or weaker sense of morality.

AND here we must pause a moment, to indulge some degree of admiration upon this part of the human system. Man is evidently intended to live in society ; and because there can be no society among creatures who prey upon one another, it was necessary, in the first place, to provide against mutual injuries. Further, man is the weakest of all creatures separately, and the very strongest in society ; therefore mutual  
assistance

assistance is the principal end of society ; and to this end it was necessary, that there should be mutual trust and reliance upon engagements, and that favours received should be thankfully repaid. Now, nothing can be more finely adjusted, than the human heart, to answer these purposes. It is not sufficient that we approve every action which is essential to the preservation of society. It is not sufficient, that we disapprove every action which tends to its dissolution. Approbation or disapprobation merely, is not sufficient to subject our conduct to the authority of a law. But the approbation in this case has the peculiar modification of duty, that these actions are what we ought to perform, and what we are indispensably bound to perform. This circumstance converts into a law, what without it can only be considered as a rational measure, and a prudential rule of conduct. Nor is any thing omitted to give it the most complete character of a law. The transgression is attended with apprehension of punishment, nay with actual punishment ; as every misfortune which befalls the transgressor is considered by him as a punishment. Nor is this the whole of the matter. Sympathy is a principle implanted in the breast of every man : we cannot hurt another without suffering for it, which is an additional punishment. And we are still further punished for our injustice or ingratitude, by incurring thereby the aversion and hatred of mankind.

C H A P.

## C H A P. IV.

*Of the DIFFERENT RANKS of MORAL VIRTUES.*

**I**T is a fact which will be universally admitted, that no man thinks so highly of himself, or of another, for having done a just, as for having done a generous action : yet every one must be sensible, that justice is more essential than generosity, to the order and preservation of society ; and why we should place the greater merit upon the less essential action, may appear unaccountable. This matter deserves to be examined, because it discloses more and more the science of morals ; and to this examination we shall proceed, after making some further observations upon the subject-matter of the preceding chapter.

THE primary virtues, as observed in that chapter, being essential to the subsistence of society, are entirely withdrawn from our election and choice. They are perceived as indispensably obligatory upon us ; and the transgression of the laws which regulate this branch of our conduct, is attended with severe and never-failing punishment. In a word, there is not a characteristic of positive law which is not applicable, in the strictest sense, to these laws of nature ; with this material difference,

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that the sanctions of these laws are greatly more efficacious than any that have been invented to enforce municipal laws. The secondary virtues, which contribute to the improvement of society, but are not strictly necessary to its subsistence are left to our own choice. They have not the character of necessity impressed upon them, nor is the forbearance of them attended with a sense of guilt. On the other hand, the actions which belong to this class, are objects of the strongest perceptions of moral beauty ; of the highest degree of approbation, both from ourselves and others. Offices of undeserved kindness, requital of good for evil, generous toils and sufferings for the good of our country, come under this class. These are not made our *duty*. There is no motive to the performance, which, in any proper sense, can be called a law. But there are the strongest motives that can consist with perfect freedom. The performance is rewarded with a consciousness of self-merit, and with the praise and admiration of all the world, which are the highest and most desirable rewards human nature is susceptible of.

THERE is so much of enthusiasm in this branch of moral beauty, that it is not wonderful to find persons of a free and generous turn of mind captivated with it, who are less attentive to the primary virtues. The magnanimous, who cannot bear restraint, are guided more by  
generosity

generosity than by justice. The sense however of strict duty is, with the bulk of mankind, a more powerful incitement to honesty, than praise and self-approbation are to generosity. And there cannot be a more pregnant example of wisdom than in this part of the human constitution; it being far more essential to society, that all men be just and honest, than that they be patriots and heroes.

FROM what is above laid down, the following observation naturally arises, that with respect to the primary virtues, the pain of transgressing our duty is much greater than the pleasure which results from obeying it. The contrary is the case of the secondary virtues. The pleasure which arises from performing a generous action is much greater than the pain of neglect. Among the vices opposite to the primary virtues, the most striking appearances of moral deformity are found; among the secondary virtues, the most striking appearances of moral beauty.

WE are now prepared to carry on the speculation suggested in the beginning of this chapter. In ranking the moral virtues according to their dignity and merit, one would readily imagine, that the primary virtues should be intitled to the highest class, as being more essential to society than those that are secondary. But, upon examination, we find that this is not the order of

nature. The first rank in point of dignity is assigned to the secondary virtues, which are not the first in point of utility. Generosity, for example, in the sense of mankind, hath more merit than justice ; and other secondary virtues, undaunted courage, magnanimity, heroism, rise still higher in our esteem. Is not nature whimsical and irregular, in ranking after this manner the moral virtues ? One at first view is apt to suspect so. But, like other difficulties which meet us in contemplating the works of nature, this under consideration arises from partial and obscure views. When this matter is examined with attention, and the whole is surveyed as well as its several parts, we at the long run discover, that nature, if in any case, has here taken her measures with peculiar foresight and wisdom. Let us only recollect what is inculcated in the foregoing part of this essay, that justice is enforced by natural sanctions of the most effectual kind, by which it becomes a law in the strictest sense, a law which never can be transgressed with impunity. To extend this law to generosity, and the other secondary virtues, and to make these our duty, would produce an inconsistency in human nature. It would make universal benevolence a strict duty, to which the limited capacity, and more limited abilities, of man, are by no means proportioned. Generosity, therefore, heroism, and all the extraordinary exertions of virtue, must be left to our own choice, without

without adjecting any punishment to the forbearance. Day-light now begins to break in upon us. If the secondary virtues must not be enforced by punishment, it becomes necessary that they be encouraged by reward; for without such encouragement, examples would be rare of sacrificing one's own interest to that of others. And after considering the matter with the utmost coolness and deliberation, I cannot, for my part, imagine any reward more proper than that actually bestowed, which is to place these virtues in the highest rank, to give them a superior dignity, and to make them productive of grand and lofty emotions. To place the primary virtues in the highest rank, would no doubt be a strong support to them. But as this could not be done without displacing the secondary virtues, detruding them into a lower rank, and consequently depriving them of their reward, the alteration would be ruinous to society. It would indeed more effectually prevent injustice and wrongs of every sort. But would it not as effectually prevent the exercise of benevolence, and the numberless benefits which we incessantly draw from each other in a social state? If it would put an end to our fears, so it would equally to our hopes; and, to say all in one word, we would, in the midst of society, become solitary beings; worse, if possible, than being solitary in a desert. Justice at the same time is not left altogether destitute of reward. Though it



reaches not the splendor of the more exalted virtues, it gains at least our esteem and approbation ; and, which is still of greater importance, it never fails to advance the happiness of those who obey its dictates, by the mental satisfaction it bestows.

**C H A P.**

## C H A P. V.

*Of the PRINCIPLES of ACTION.*

**I**N the three chapters immediately foregoing, we have taken some pains to inquire into the moral sense, and to analyze it into its different parts. Our present task must be to inquire into those principles in our nature which move us to action. These must be distinguished from the moral sense; which, properly speaking, is not a principle of action. Its province, as shall forthwith be explained, is to instruct us, which of our principles of action we may indulge, and which of them we must restrain. It is the voice of God within us, regulating our appetites and passions, and showing us what are lawful, what unlawful.

IN a treatise upon the law of nature, it is of great importance to trace out the principles by which we are incited to action. It is above observed, that the laws of nature can be no other than rules of action adapted to our nature. Now, our nature, so far as concerns action, is made up of appetites and passions, which move us to action, and of the moral sense, by which these appetites and passions are governed. The moral sense, of itself, is in no case intended to be the first mover: but it is an excellent second,

cond, by the most authoritative of all motives, that of duty. Nature is not so rigid to us her favourite children, as to leave our conduct upon the motive of duty solely. A more masterly and kindly hand is visible in the architecture of man. We are impelled to motion by the very constitution of our nature; and to prevent our being carried too far, or in a wrong direction, conscience is set as at the helm. That such is our nature, may be made evident from induction. Were conscience alone, in any case, to be the sole principle of action, it might be expected in matters of justice, of which we have the strongest sense, as our indispensable duty. We find this however no exception from the general plan. For is not love of justice a principle of action common to all men? This principle gives the first impulse, which is finely seconded by the influence and authority of conscience. It may safely therefore be pronounced, that no action is a duty, to the performance of which we are not prompted by some natural motive or principle. To make such an action our duty, would be to lay down a rule of conduct contrary to our nature, or that has no foundation in our nature. Actions to which we are incited by a natural principle, are some of them authorised, others condemned by conscience; but conscience, or the moral sense, is not, in any case, the sole principle or motive of action. Nature has assigned it a different province. This is

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a truth which has been little attended to by those who have given us systems of natural laws. No wonder they have gone astray. Let this truth be kept close in view, and it will put an end to many a controversy about these laws. If, for example, it be laid down as a primary law of nature, That we are strictly bound to advance the good of all, regarding our own interest no farther than as it makes a part of the general happiness, we may safely reject such a law, as inconsistent with our nature; unless it be made appear, that there is a principle of benevolence in man which prompts him to an equal pursuit of the happiness of all. To found this disinterested scheme wholly upon the moral sense, would be a vain attempt. The moral sense, as above observed, is our guide only, not our mover. Approbation or disapprobation of these actions, to which, by some natural principle, we are antecedently directed, is all that can result from it. If it be laid down, on the other hand, That we ought to regard ourselves only in all our actions; and that it is folly, if not vice, to concern ourselves for others; such a law can never be admitted, unless upon the supposition that self-love is our only principle of action.

It is probable, that, in the following particular, man differs from the brute creation. Brutes are entirely governed by principles of action, which, in them, obtain the name of instincts.

instincts. They blindly follow their instincts, and are led by that instinct which is strongest for the time. It is *meet* and *fit* they should act after this manner, because it is acting according to the whole of their nature. But for man to suffer himself to be led implicitly by instinct, or his principles of action, without check or control, is not acting according to the whole of his nature. He is endued with a moral sense, or conscience, to check and control his principles of action, and to instruct him which of them he may indulge, and which of them he ought to restrain. This account of the brute creation is undoubtedly true in the main: whether so in every particular, is of no importance to the present subject, being suggested by way of contrast only, to illustrate the peculiar nature of man.

A FULL account of our principles of action would be an endless theme. But as it is proposed to confine the present short essay to the laws which govern social life, we shall have no occasion to inquire into any principles of action, but what are directed upon others; dropping those which have self alone for their object. And, in this inquiry, we set out with the following question, In what sense are we to hold a principle of universal benevolence, as belonging to human nature? This question is of importance in the science of morals: for, as observed above, universal benevolence cannot be a duty,  
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if we be not antecedently prompted to it by a natural principle. When we consider a single man, abstracted from all circumstances and all connections, we are not conscious of any benevolence to him ; we feel nothing within us that prompts us to advance his happiness. If one be agreeable at first sight, and attract any degree of affection, it is owing to looks, manners, or behaviour. And for evidence of this, we are as apt to be disgusted at first sight, as to be pleased. Man is by nature a shy and timorous animal. Every new object gives an impression of fear, till, upon better acquaintance, it is discovered to be harmless. Thus an infant clings to its nurse, upon the sight of a new face ; and this natural dread is not removed but by long experience. If every human creature did produce affection in every other at first sight, children, by natural instinct, would be fond of strangers. But no such instinct discovers itself. The fondness of a child is confined to the nurse, the parents, and those who are most about it ; till, by degrees, it open to a sense of other connections. This argument may be illustrated by a low, but apt instance. Dogs have, by nature, an affection for the human species ; and upon this account, puppies run to the first man they see, show marks of fondness, and play about his feet. There is no such general fondness of man to man by nature. Certain circumstances are always required to produce and call it forth. Distress indeed never

ver fails to beget sympathy. The misery of the most unknown gives us pain, and we are prompted by nature to afford relief. But when there is nothing to call forth our sympathy; where there are no peculiar circumstances to interest us, or beget a connection, we rest in a state of indifference, and are not conscious of wishing either good or ill to the person. Those moralists, therefore, who require us to lay aside all partial affection, and to act upon a principle of equal benevolence to all men, require us to act upon a principle, which, in truth, has no place in our nature.

IN the manner now mentioned, a principle of universal benevolence does certainly not exist in man. Let us next inquire if it exist in any other manner. The happiness of mankind is an object agreeable to the mind in contemplation; and good men have a sensible pleasure in every study or pursuit by which they can promote it. It must indeed be acknowledged, that benevolence is not equally directed to all men, but gradually decreaseth, according to the distance of the object, till it dwindle away to nothing. But here comes in a happy contrivance of nature, to supply the want of benevolence towards distant objects; which is, to give power to an abstract term, such as, our religion, our country, our government, or even mankind, to raise benevolence or public spirit in the mind. The particular

lar objects under each of these classes, considered singly and apart, may have little or no force to produce affection ; but when comprehended under one general view, they become an object that dilates and warms the heart. In this manner, a man is enabled to embrace in his affection all mankind : and, in this sense, man, without question, is endued with a principle of universal benevolence.

THAT man must have a great share of indifference in his temper, who can reflect upon this branch of human nature without some degree of emotion. There is perhaps not one scene to be met with, in the natural or moral world, where more of design, and of consummate wisdom, are displayed, than in this under consideration. The authors, who, impressed with reverence for human nature, have endeavoured to exalt it to the highest pitch, could none of them stretch their imagination beyond a principle of equal benevolence to every individual. And a very fine scheme it is in idea. But, unluckily, it is entirely of the Utopian kind, altogether unfit for life and action. It hath escaped the consideration of these authors, that man is by nature of a limited capacity, and that his affection, by multiplication of objects, instead of being increased, is split into parts, and weakened by division. A principle of universal equal benevolence, by dividing the attention and affection, instead of promoting

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moting benevolent actions, would in reality be an obstruction to them. The mind would be distracted by the multiplicity of objects that have an equal influence, so as to be eternally at a loss where to begin. But the human system is better adjusted, than to admit of such disproportion betwixt ability and affection. The chief objects of a man's love are his friends and relations. He reserves some share to bestow on his neighbours. His affection lessens gradually, in proportion to the distance of the object, till it vanish altogether. But were this the whole of human nature, with regard to benevolence, man would be but an abject creature. By a very happy contrivance, objects which, because of their distance, have little or no influence, are made by accumulation, and by being gathered together in one general view, to have the very strongest effect; exceeding, in many instances, the most lively affection that is bestowed upon a particular object. By this happy contrivance, the attention of the mind, and its affections, are preferred entire, to be bestowed upon general objects, instead of being dissipated among an endless number of individuals. Nothing more ennobles human nature than this principle or spring of action; and at the same time, nothing is more wonderful, than that a general term, to which a very faint, if any idea, is affixed, should be the foundation of a more intense affection than is bestowed, for the most part, upon particular objects,

objects, how attractive soever. When we talk of our country, our religion, our government, the ideas annexed to these general terms are, at best, obscure and indistinct. General terms are extremely useful in language; serving, like mathematical signs, to communicate our thoughts in a summary way. But the use of them is not confined to language. They serve for a much nobler purpose; to excite us to generous and benevolent actions, of the most exalted kind; not confined to individuals, but grasping whole societies, towns, countries, kingdoms, nay all mankind. By this curious mechanism, the defect of our nature is amply remedied. Distant objects, otherwise insensible, are rendered conspicuous. Accumulation makes them great, and greatness brings them near the eye. The affection is preserved, to be bestowed entire, as upon a single object. And, to say all in one word, this system of benevolence, which is really founded in human nature, and not the invention of man, is infinitely better contrived to advance the good and happiness of mankind, than any Utopian system that ever has been produced by the warmest imagination.

UPON the opposite system, of absolute selfishness, there is no occasion to lose a moment. It is evidently chimerical, because it has no foundation in human nature. It is not more certain, that there exists the creature man, than that he

hath principles of action directed entirely upon others ; some to do good, and others to do mischief. Who can doubt of this, when friendship, compassion, gratitude, on the one hand ; and, on the other, malice and resentment, are considered ? It hath indeed been observed, that we indulge such passions and affections merely for our own gratification. But no person can relish this observation, who is in any measure acquainted with human nature. The social affections are in fact the source of the deepest afflictions, as well as of the most exalted pleasures, as has been fully laid open in the foregoing essay. In a word, we are evidently formed by nature for society, and for indulging the social, as well as the selfish passions ; and therefore to contend, that we ought to regard ourselves only, and to be influenced by no principles but what are selfish, is directly to fly in the face of nature, and to lay down a rule of conduct inconsistent with our nature.

THESE systems being laid aside, as deviating from the nature of man, the way lies open to come at what are his true and genuine principles of action. The first thing that nature consults, is the preservation of her creatures. Hence the love of life is made the strongest of all instincts. Upon the same foundation, pain is in a greater degree the object of aversion, than pleasure is of desire. Pain warns us of what tends to our dissolution,

solution, and thereby is a strong guard to self-preservation. Pleasure is often sought after unwarily, and by means dangerous to health and life. Pain comes in as a monitor of our danger; and nature, consulting our preservation in the first place, and our gratification in the second only, wisely gives pain more force to draw us back, than it gives pleasure to push us forward.

THE second principle of action is self-love, or desire of our own happiness and good. This is a stronger principle than benevolence, or love bestowed upon others; and in that respect is wisely ordered; because every man has more power, knowledge, and opportunity, to promote his own good than that of others. Thus the good of individuals is principally trusted to their own care. It is agreeable to the limited nature of such a creature as man, that it should be so; and, consequently, it is wisely ordered, that every man should have the strongest affection for himself.

THE foregoing principles having *self* for their object, come not properly under the present undertaking. They are barely mentioned, to illustrate, by opposition, the following principles, which regard others. Of this sort, the most universal is the love of justice, without which there could be no society. Veracity is another principle not less universal. Fidelity, a third

principle, is circumscribed within narrower bounds; for it cannot exist without a peculiar connection betwixt two persons, to found a reliance on the one side, which requires on the other a conduct corresponding to the reliance. Gratitude is a fourth principle of action, universally acknowledged. And benevolence possesses the last place, diversified by its objects, and exerting itself more vigorously or more faintly, in proportion to the distance of particular objects, and the grandeur of those that are general. This principle of action has one remarkable quality, that it operates with much greater force to relieve those in distress, than to promote positive good. In the case of distress, sympathy comes to its aid; and, in that circumstance, it acquires the name of *compassion*.

THESE several principles of action are ordered with admirable wisdom, to promote the general good, in the best and most effectual manner. We act for the general good, when we act upon these principles, even when it is not our immediate aim. The general good is an object too remote, to be the sole impulsive motive to action. It is better ordered, that, in most instances, individuals should have a limited aim, which they can readily accomplish. To every man is assigned his own task. And if every man do his duty, the general good will be promoted  
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much more effectually, than if it were the aim in every single action.

THE above-mentioned principles of action belong to man as such, and constitute what may be called the common nature of man. Many other principles exert themselves upon particular objects, in the instinctive manner, without the intervention of any sort of reasoning or reflection, which also belong to man as such; appetite for food, animal love, &c. Other particular appetites, passions, and affections, such as ambition, avarice, envy, &c. constitute the peculiar nature of individuals; because these are distributed among individuals in very different degrees. It belongs to the science of ethics, to treat of these particular principles of action. All that needs here be observed of them is, that it is the aim of the general principle of self-love, to obtain gratification to these particular principles.

CHAP.

## C H A P. VI.

*Of the SOURCE of the LAWS of NATURE,  
according to some authors.*

HAVING thus at full length explained the nature of man, so far as concerns the present subject, it may not be disagreeable to the reader, to have some relaxation, before he enter upon the remaining part of the work. We shall fill up this interval, with a view of some opinions about the foundation of the laws of nature, which we cannot help judging to be inaccurate, if not erroneous. The episode is, at the same time, strictly connected with the principal subject; because truth is always best illustrated by opposing it to error. That morality depends entirely on the will of God, and that his will creates the only obligation we lie under to be virtuous, is the opinion of several writers. This opinion, in one sense, is true; but far from being true in their sense who inculcate it. And, true or false, it does not advance us a single step in the knowledge of our duty. For what does it avail, to know, that morality depends upon the will of God, till we once know what his will is? If it be said, there is an original revelation of it to us in our nature; this can only mean, that our nature itself makes us perceive the distinction

inction betwixt virtue and vice, which is the very doctrine above laid down. But, say they, God, from the purity and rectitude of his nature, cannot but approve good actions, and disapprove such as are otherways. Here they don't consider, that this argument supposes a distinction betwixt virtue and vice, antecedent to the will of God. For if, abstracting from his will, virtue and vice were indifferent, which is supposed in the proposition, we have no *data* from the purity of God's nature, or from any other principle, to conclude, that virtue is more the object of his choice than vice. But, further, the very supposition of the purity and rectitude of the nature of the divine being, presupposes a sense or knowledge in us of an essential difference betwixt virtue and vice. Therefore it can never be said, in any proper sense, that our only obligation to virtue is the will of God; seeing it is true, that, abstracting altogether from his will, there is an obligation to virtue founded in the very frame of our nature.

IN one sense indeed it is true, that morality depends upon the will of God, who made us such as we are, with a moral sense to distinguish virtue from vice. But this is saying no more, but that it is God's will, or that it is agreeable to him, we should be virtuous. It is another thing to maintain, that man is indifferent to virtue and vice, and that he is under no obligation to



to the one more than to the other, unless so far as he is determined by the arbitrary will of a superior or sovereign. That a being may be so framed as to answer this description, may be yielded. But, taking man as he is, endued with a moral sense, it is a direct contradiction to hold, that he is under no obligation to virtue, other than the mere will of God. In this sense, morality no more depends upon the will of God, than upon our own will.

WE shall next take a view of a doctrine which may be set in opposition to the foregoing; and that is, Dr Clarke's demonstration of the unalterable obligation of moral duty. His proposition is, "That, from the eternal and necessary differences of things, there naturally and necessarily arise certain moral obligations, which are of themselves incumbent on all rational creatures, antecedent to all positive institution, and to all expectation of reward or punishment." And this proposition he demonstrates in the following manner. "That there is a fitness of certain circumstances to certain persons, and an unfitness of others, antecedent to positive laws; and that, from the different relations of different things, there arises a fitness and unfitness of certain behaviour of some persons. For instance, God is superior to man, and therefore it is fit that man should worship him."

IF this demonstration, as it is called, be the only or chief foundation of morals, unlucky it is, that a doctrine of such importance should have so long been hid from mankind. The ancients, however, carried the obligation of morals perhaps as far as this eminent divine does. And now that the important discovery is made, it is not likely to do great service; considering how little the bulk of mankind are able to enter into abstruse reasoning, and how little influence such reasoning generally has, after it is apprehended.

BUT abstruseness is not the only imperfection of this celebrated argument. It appears to me altogether inconclusive. Laying aside perception and the moral sense, upon which the Doctor founds no part of his demonstration, I should be utterly at a loss, from any given relation betwixt persons, to draw a conclusion of the fitness or unfitness of a certain course of behaviour. "God is our superior, and therefore it is fit we should worship him." I put the question, Upon what principle of reason does this conclusion rest? where is the connecting proposition by means of which the inference is drawn? Here the Doctor must be utterly at a loss. For the truth of the matter is, that the terms *fitness* and *unfitness*, in their present signification, depend entirely upon the moral sense. *Fitness* and *unfitness*, with regard to a certain end or purpose,

pose, are qualities of actions which may be gathered from experience. But *fitness* or *unfitness* of actions, as importing *right* or *wrong*, as denoting what we *ought* to do, or abstain from, have truly no meaning, unless upon supposition of a moral sense, which this learned divine never once dreams of taking into his argument. The Doctor's error therefore is a common one, that he endeavours to substitute reason in place of sentiment. The fitness of worshipping our Creator was obvious to him, as it is to every man, because it is founded in our very nature. It is equally obvious with the preference of honesty to dishonesty. His only mistake is, that, overlooking the *law written in his own heart*, he vainly imagines that his metaphysical argument is just, because the consequence he draws from it happens to be true. And to satisfy even his most devoted disciples, that this is the case, let us only suppose, that man, by nature, had no approbatory or disapprobatory sense of actions; it could never be evinced, by any abstract argument whatever, that the worship of the Deity is his duty, or, in the moral sense of fitness, that it is more fit for him to be honest than to be dishonest.

AND, upon this head, we will take the liberty to add, because it is of importance to the subject in general, that, supposing our duty could be made plain to us, by an abstract chain of reasoning, yet we have good ground to conclude, from analogy,

analogy, that the author of nature has not left our actions to be directed by so weak a principle as reason : and a weak principle it must be to the bulk of mankind, who have little capacity to enter into abstract reasoning ; whatever effect it may have upon the learned and contemplative. Nature has dealt more kindly by us. We are compelled by cogent principles, to perform all the different duties of life. Self-preservation is not left to the conduct of reason, but is guarded by the strongest instinct, which makes us carefully, or rather mechanically, avoid every appearance of danger. The propagation of the species is enforced by the most importunate of all appetites ; and the care of our offspring, by a lively and constant affection. Is nature so deficient, as to leave the duty we owe our neighbour, which stands in the first rank of duties, to be directed by cool reasoning ? This is not according to the analogy of nature : nor is it fact ; witness compassion, friendship, benevolence, and all the tribe of the social affections. Neither is common justice left upon this footing, the most useful, though not the most exalted virtue. We are compelled to it by a principle common to all men, and it is attended with a severe sense of disapprobation, and of merited punishment.

A LATE author \*, whom I shall just mention

\* Wollaston.

by the way, gives a whimsical system of morals. He endeavours to reduce all crimes to that of telling a lie; and, because telling a lie is immoral, he concludes, that the several crimes he mentions are immoral. Robbery, for example, is acting or telling a lie; because it is in effect saying, that the goods I seize are mine. Adultery is acting or telling a lie, because it is in effect maintaining, that my neighbour's wife is not his, but mine. But not to insist upon the absurdity of giving all crimes the same character, and confounding their nature, it appears evident, that, in this argument, the very thing is taken for granted which is to be proved. For why is it a virtual lie to rob one of his goods? Is it not by imposing upon mankind, who must presume those goods to be mine, which I take as my own? But does not this evidently presuppose a difference betwixt *meum* and *tuum*, and that I ought not to make free with another's property without his consent? For what other reason are the goods presumed to be mine, but that it is unlawful to meddle with what belongs to another? The same observation will apply to all his other transmutations; for, in acting or telling the lie, it is constantly taken for granted, that the action is wrong in itself. And this very wrong is the circumstance which, by the author's supposition, imposes upon the spectators. The error therefore of this author is of the same nature with Dr Clarke's, in his system above examined,

mined. It is an evident begging of the question : the very thing is taken for granted which is undertaken to be proved. With regard to the present subject, we have no occasion further to observe of this curious author, that when he draws so strong consequences from telling a lie, it was incumbent upon him to set in the clearest light the immorality of that action. But this he does not so much as attempt, leaving it upon the conviction of one's own mind. This indeed he might safely do ; but not more safely than to leave upon the same conviction all the other crimes he treats of.

## C H A P. VII.

*Of JUSTICE and INJUSTICE.*

JUSTICE is that moral virtue which guards property, and gives authority to covenants. And as it is made out above, that justice, being essentially necessary to the maintenance of society, is one of those primary virtues which are enforced by the strongest natural laws, it would be unnecessary to say more upon the subject, were it not for a doctrine espoused by the author of a treatise upon human nature, that justice, so far from being one of the primary virtues, is not even a natural virtue, but established in society by a sort of tacit convention, founded upon a notion of public interest. The figure which this author deservedly makes in the learned world, is too considerable, to admit of his being passed over in silence. And as it is of great importance to creatures who live in society, to be made sensible upon how firm a basis justice is erected, a chapter expressly upon that subject may perhaps not be unacceptable to the reader.

OUR author's doctrine, so far as it concerns that branch of justice by which property is secured, comes to this : That, in a state of nature, there can be no such thing as property ; and that the idea of property arises, after justice is  
established.

established by convention, whereby every one is secured in his possessions. In opposition to this singular doctrine, there is no difficulty to make out, that we have an idea of property, antecedent to any sort of agreement or convention; that property is founded on a natural principle; and that violation of property is attended with remorse, and a sense of breach of duty. In prosecuting this subject, it will appear how admirably the springs of human nature are adapted one to another, and to external circumstances.

THE surface of this globe, which scarce yields spontaneously food for the wildest savages, is by labour and industry made so fruitful, as to supply man, not only with necessaries, but even with materials for luxury. Man originally made shift to support himself, partly by prey, and partly by the natural fruits of the earth. In this state he in some measure resembled beasts of prey, who devour instantly what they seize, and whose care is at an end when the belly is full. But man was not designed by nature to be an animal of prey. A tenor of life where food is so precarious, requires a constitution that can bear long fasting and immoderate eating, as occasion offers. Man is of a different make. He requires regular and frequent supplies of food, which could not be obtained in his original occupations of fishing and hunting. He found it necessary therefore to abandon this manner of life, and to



become shepherd. The wild creatures, such of them as are gentle and proper for food, were brought under subjection. Hence herds of cattle, sheep, goats, &c. ready at hand for the sustenance of man. This contrivance was succeeded by another. A bit of land is divided from the common; it is cultivated with the spade or plough; grain is sown, and the product is stored for the use of a family. Reason and reflection prompted these improvements, which are essential to our well-being, and in a good measure necessary even for bare existence. But a matter which concerns self-preservation, is of too great moment to be left entirely to the conduct of reason. This would not be according to the analogy of nature. To secure against neglect or indolence, man is provided with a principle that operates instinctively without reflection; and that is the hoarding disposition, common to him with several other animals. No author, I suppose, will be so bold as to deny this disposition to be natural and universal. It would be shameless to deny it, considering how solicitous every man is after a competency, and how anxious the plurality are to swell that competency beyond all bounds. The hoarding appetite, while moderate, is not graced with a proper name. When it exceeds just bounds, it is known by the name of *avarice*.

THE compass I have taken is large, but the shortest road is not always the smoothest or most patent.

patent. I come now to the point, by putting a plain question, What sort of creature would man be, endued as he is with a hoarding principle, but with no sense or notion of property? He hath a constant propensity to hoard for his own use; conscious at the same time that his stores are not less free to others than to himself;—racked thus perpetually betwixt the desire of appropriation, and consciousness of its being scarce practicable. I say more; the hoarding principle is an instinct obviously calculated for assisting reason, in moving us to provide against want. This instinct, like all others in the human soul, ought to be a cause adequate to the effect which is intended to be accomplished by it. But this it cannot be, independent of a sense of property. For what effectual provision can be made against want, when the stores of every individual are, without any check from conscience, left free to the depredations of the whole species? Here would be a palpable defect or inconsistency in the nature of man. If I could suppose this to be his case, I should believe him to be a creature made in haste, and left unfinished. I am certain there is no such inconsistency to be found in any other branch of human nature; nor indeed, so far as we can discover, in any other creature that is endued with the hoarding principle. Every bee inhabits its own cell, and feeds on its own honey. Every crow has its own nest; and punishment is always applied, when a single stick happens

happens to be pilfered. But we find no such inconsistency in man. The cattle tamed by an individual, and the field cultivated by him, were held univcrsally to be his own from the beginning. A relation is formed betwixt every man and the fruits of his own labour, the very thing we call property, which he himself is sensible of, and of which every other is equally sensible. *Yours* and *mine* are terms in all languages, familiar among savages, and understood even by children. - This is a matter of fact, which every human creature can testify.

THIS reasoning may be illustrated by many apt analogies. I shall mention one in particular. Veracity, and a disposition to believe what is affirmed for truth, are corresponding principles, which make one entire branch of the human nature. Veracity would be of no use were men not disposed to believe; and, abstracting from veracity, a disposition to believe, would be a dangerous quality; for it would lay us open to fraud and deceit. There is precisely the same correspondence betwixt the hoarding principle and the sense of property. The latter is useless without the former; witness animals of prey, who having no occasion for property, have no notion of it. The former again, without the latter, is altogether insufficient to produce the effect for which it is intended by nature.

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THUS it appears clear, that the sense of property does not owe its existence to society. But in a matter of so great importance in the science of morals, I cannot rest satisfied with a successful defence. I aim at a complete victory, by insisting on a proposition directly opposite to that of my antagonist, *viz.* That society owes its existence to the sense of property; or at least, that without this sense no society ever could have been formed. In the proof of this proposition, we have already made a considerable progress, by evincing, that man by his nature is a hoarding animal, and loves to store for his own use. In order to the conclusion, we have but one farther step to make; which is, to consider what originally would have been the state of man, supposing him destitute of the sense of property. The answer is extremely obvious, That it would have been a state of universal war;—of men preying upon each other;—of robbing and pilfering the necessaries of life, where-ever found, without regard to industry, or the connection that is formed betwixt an individual and the fruits of his own labour. Courage and bodily strength would have stood in place of right, and nothing left for the weak, but to hide themselves and their goods, under ground, or in inaccessible places. And to do Hobbes justice, who, as well as our author, denies the sense of property to be natural, he fairly owns this reasoning to be just, and boldly asserts, that the state of nature is a state of war,

war, all against all. In a word, destitute of the sense of property, men would naturally be enemies to each other, not less than they are to wolves and foxes at present. Now, if this must have been the original condition of man, let our author say, by what over-ruling power, by what miracle, individuals so disposed ever came to unite in society. We may pronounce with great assurance, that so signal a revolution in the state of man could never have been compassed by natural means. Nothing can be more evident, than that relying upon the sense of property, and the prevalence of justice, a few individuals ventured at first to unite for mutual defence and mutual support; and finding the manifold comforts of such a state, that they afterwards gradually united into larger and larger societies.

IT must not be overlooked, that the sense of property is fortified by another principle. Every man has a peculiar affection for what he calls his *own*. He applies his skill and industry with great alacrity to improve his own subject: his affection to it grows with the time of his possession; and he puts a much greater value upon it, than upon any subject of the same kind that belongs to another.

BUT this is not all that is involved in the sense of property. We not only suffer pain in having our goods taken from us by force; for that  
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would happen were they destroyed or lost by accident. We have the sense of *wrong* and *injustice*. The person who robs us has the same sense, and every mortal who beholds the action, considers it as vitious, and contrary to *right*.

JUDGING it not altogether sufficient to have overturned the foundation of our author's doctrine, we proceed to make some observations upon it, in order to show how ill it hangs together.

AND, in the first place, he appears to reason not altogether consistently in making out his system. He founds justice on a general sense of common interest\*. And yet, at no greater distance than a few pages, he endeavours to make out †, and does it successfully, that public interest is a motive too remote and too sublime to affect the generality of mankind, and to operate, with any force, in actions so contrary to private interest, as are frequently those of justice and common honesty.

IN the second place, abstracting from the sense of property, it does not appear, that a sense of common interest would necessarily lead to such a regulation, as that every man should have the undisturbed enjoyment of what he hath acquired by his industry or good fortune. Supposing

\* Vol. 3. p. 59.

† Vol. 3. p. 43.

no sense of property, I do not see it inconsistent with society, to have a Lacedemonian constitution, that every man may lawfully take what by address he can make himself master of, without force or violence. The depriving us of that to which we have no right, would be doing little more than drinking in our brook, or breathing in our air. At any rate, such a refined regulation would never be considered of importance enough, to be established upon the very commencement of society. It must come late, if at all, and be the effect of long experience, and great refinement in the art of living. It is very true, that, abstaining from the goods of others, is a regulation, without which society cannot well subsist. But the necessity of this regulation ariseth from the sense of property, without which a man would suffer little pain in losing his goods, and would have no notion of wrong or injustice. There appears not any way to evade the force of this reasoning, other than peremptorily to deny the reality of the sense of property. Others may, but our author, after all, cannot with a good grace do it. An appeal may be safely made to his own authority. For is it not evidently this sense, which hath suggested to him the necessity, in the institution of every society, to secure individuals in their possessions? He cannot but be sensible, that, abstracting from the affection for property, the necessity would be just nothing at all. But our perceptions operate  
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calmly and silently ; and there is nothing more common, than to strain for far-fetched arguments in support of conclusions which are suggested by the simplest and most obvious perceptions.

A THIRD observation is, that since our author resolves all virtue into sympathy, why should he withhold the same principle from being the foundation of justice ? Why should not sympathy give us a painful sensation, in depriving our neighbour of the goods he has acquired by industry, as well as in depriving him of his life or limb ? For it is a fact too evident to be denied, that many men are more uneasy at the loss of their goods, than at the loss of a member.

AND, in the last place, were justice founded on a general sense of common interest only, it behoved to be the weakest sense in human nature ; especially where injustice is committed against a stranger, with whom we are not in any manner connected. Now, this is contrary to all experience. The sense of injustice is one of the strongest that belongs to humanity, and is also of a peculiar nature. It involves a sense of duty which is transgressed, and of meriting punishment for the transgression. Had our author but once reflected upon these peculiarities, he never could have been satisfied with the slight founda-

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tion he gives to justice ; for these peculiarities are altogether unaccountable upon his system.

I SHALL close this reasoning with one reflection in general upon the whole. The subject in dispute is a strong instance how dangerous it is to erect schemes, and assert propositions, without relation to facts and experiments ; — not less dangerous in morals than in natural philosophy. Had our author examined human nature, and patiently submitted to the method of induction, by making a complete collection of facts, before venturing upon general propositions ; I am positive he would have been as far as any man from maintaining, that justice is an artificial virtue, and that property is the child of society. Discovering this edifice of his to be a mere castle in the air, without the slightest foundation, he would have abandoned it without any reluctance.

THAT branch of justice which regards promises and covenants, hath also a solid foundation in human nature ; notwithstanding what is laid down by our author in two distinct propositions \*, “ That a promise would not be intelligible, before human conventions had established it ; and, That, even if it were intelligible, it would not be attended with any moral obligation.” As man is framed for society, mutual trust and confidence, without which there can be no society, enter into the character of the

\* p. 102.

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human species. Corresponding to these, are the principles of veracity and fidelity. Veracity and fidelity would be of no significancy, were men not disposed to have faith, and to rely upon what is said to them, whether in the way of evidence or engagement. Faith and trust, on the other hand, would be very hurtful principles, were mankind void of veracity and fidelity. For, upon that supposition, the world, as observed above, would be over-run with fraud and deceit. If that branch of justice which restrains us from harming each other, be essential to the very existence of society, fidelity and veracity are not less essential to its well-being: for from them spring mostly the advantages that are peculiar to the social life. It is justly observed by our author, that man in a solitary state is the most helpless of beings; and that by society only he is enabled to supply his defects, and to acquire a superiority over his fellow-creatures; that, by conjunction of forces, our power is augmented; by partition of employments, we work to better purpose; and, by mutual succour, we acquire security. But, without mutual fidelity and trust, we could enjoy none of these advantages; without them, we could not have any comfortable intercourse with each other. Hence it is, that treachery is the vilest of crimes, and what mankind have ever held in the utmost abhorrence. It is worse than murder, because it forms a character, and is directed against all mankind; where-

as murder is but a transitory act, directed against a single person. Infidelity is of the same species with treachery. The essence of both crimes is the same, to wit, breach of trust. Treachery has only this aggravating circumstance, that it turns the confidence reposed in me against the friend who trusts me. Now, breach of promise is a species of infidelity; and therefore our author has but a single choice. He must either maintain, that treachery is no crime, or that breach of promise is a crime. And, in fact, that it is so, every man must bear evidence to himself. The performance of a deliberate promise has, in all ages, been considered as a duty. We have that sense of a promise, as what we are bound to perform by a strict obligation; and the breach of promise is attended with the same natural stings which attend other crimes, *sciz.* remorse, and a sense of merited punishment.

IT is evident from what is now said, that it is but an imperfect conception of a promise, to consider it, as our author does \*, with relation only to the person who makes the promise. In this act two persons are concerned; the person who makes the promise, and the person to whom the promise is made. Were there by nature no trust nor reliance upon promises, breach of promise would be a matter of indifferency. There-

\* Vol. 3. p. 102.

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fore the essence of a promise consists in keeping faith. The reliance upon us, produced by our own act, constitutes the obligation. We feel ourselves bound to perform; we consider it as our duty. And when we violate our engagement, we have a sense of moral turpitude in disappointing the person who relied upon our faith.

WE shall close this subject, concerning the foundation of justice, with a general reflection. Running over every branch of our duty, what concerns ourselves as well as our neighbours, we find, that nature has been more provident, than to trust us entirely to the guidance of cool reason. It is observed above, that our duty is enforced by instinct and appetite, as well as it is directed by reason. Now, if man be a social being, and justice essential to society, it is not according to the analogy of nature, that we should be left to investigate this branch of our duty by a chain of reasoning; especially where the reasoning, according to our author's doctrine, turns upon so remote an object as public good. May we not apply to justice, what is so beautifully reasoned concerning society, in a dialogue upon happiness \*, " If society be thus  
 " agreeable to our nature, is there nothing with-  
 " in us to excite and lead us to it? no impulse;  
 " no preparation of faculties? It would be

\* p. 155.

“strange if there should not.” If we be fitted by our nature for society ; if pity, benevolence, friendship, love, the general dislike of solitude, and desire of company, be natural affections, all of them conducive to society, it would be strange if there should be no natural affection, no preparation of faculties, to direct us to do justice, which is so essential to society. But nature has not failed us here, more than in the other parts of our constitution. We have a sense of property ; we have a sense of obligation to perform our engagements ; and we have a sense of wrong in incroaching upon property, and in being untrue to our engagements. Society could not subsist without these affections, more than it could subsist without the social affections, properly so called. We have reason, *a priori*, to conclude equally in favour of both ; and we find, upon examination, that our conclusion is just.

C H A P.

## C H A P. VIII.

*Of the PRIMARY LAWS of NATURE.*

WE are now arrived at what is chiefly the purpose of the present essay; and that is, to give a slight sketch, or cursory view, of the primary laws of nature, deduced from human nature, their true source. This task I undertake, as a specimen merely of that sort of reasoning which belongs to the subject; for a complete treatise is far beyond my reach. Action ought to be the end and aim of all our inquiries; without which, moral, as well as metaphysical reasonings, are but empty speculation. And as life and manners are more peculiarly the object of the moral science, the weight and importance of the subject, one would imagine, must have brought authors to one way of thinking. But it is lamentable to find the world divided about these primary laws, almost as much as they commonly are about the most airy and abstract points. Some authors acknowledge no principle in man, and consequently no duty, but what is altogether selfish; and it is curious to observe how they wrest and torture every social principle to give it the appearance of selfishness. Others exalt human nature much above its just standard, give no quarter to selfishness, but consider man

as bound to direct every action to the good of the whole, and not to prefer his own interest to that of others. The celebrated Lord Shaftesbury goes so far, as not to admit of any thing like partial benevolence ; holding, that if it be not entire, and directed to the whole species, it is not benevolence at all. It is not difficult to assign a cause for such difference in opinion ; though it may appear strange, that authors should differ so widely about the nature of man, which every man ought to be acquainted with. There is nothing more common in philosophy, as well as in action, than to build castles in the air. Impatient of the slow and cold method of induction, we fly to systems, which every writer takes the liberty of framing, according to his own taste and fancy. Fond of the fabric which he himself hath erected, it is far from his thoughts to subject it to examination, by trying whether it will stand the test of stubborn facts. Men of narrow minds, and contracted principles, naturally fall in with the selfish system. The system of universal benevolence attracts the generous and warm-hearted. In the midst of various and opposite opinions, the purpose of this essay is, by the patient method of induction, to search for truth ; and, after what is above laid down, it will not be difficult to find it.

LET us only recapitulate, that the principles of action impel to action, and that the moral sense

sense is given as an instructor to regulate our actions, to enforce one principle, to restrain another, and to prefer one to another when they are in opposition. Hence the laws of nature may be defined to be, *Rules of our conduct and behaviour, founded on natural principles, approved by the moral sense, and enforced by natural rewards and punishments.*

IN searching for these laws, it must be obvious, from what is above said, that, by the moral sense, a difference is clearly established among our principles of action. Some are enforced by the consciousness of duty; some are left in a measure upon our own choice. With respect to the former, we have no liberty, but ought to proceed to action: with respect to the latter, we may freely indulge every natural impulse, where the action is not disapproved by the moral sense. From this short sketch may be readily deduced all the laws of nature which govern human actions; though, in the present essay, the duty which a man owes to himself, where others are not concerned, is not comprehended.

OF the principles of action which are enforced by the consciousness of duty, the principle of justice takes the lead. It consists of two branches, one to abstain from harming others, and one to perform our positive engagements. With respect to both of them no choice is admitted. We are bound



bound to perform every act of justice as our indispensable duty. Veracity, fidelity, and gratitude, are principles of action which come under the same class. And with respect to the whole, it ought not to be overlooked, that the internal constitution of man is adjusted with admirable wisdom to his external circumstances as a social being. Were we allowed to prey upon one another like savage animals, there could be no society; and were there nothing in our nature that could bind us to instruct, to comfort, to benefit each other, society would be deprived of all its advantages, and man, in the midst of society, would be a solitary being. Benevolence is another principle of action, which, in many circumstances, by means of peculiar connections, becomes also an indispensable duty. Witness the connection of parent and child. We are obliged to provide for our children; it is strict duty, and the neglect of it causes remorse. In the case of other blood-relations, an only brother, for example, who depends entirely on our help, we feel somewhat of the same kind of obligation, though in a weaker degree; and thus, through other connections, it diminisheth by successive gradations, till, at last, the sense of duty is lost in simple approbation, without any obligatory feeling. This is universally the course which nature holds. Her transitions are soft and gentle. She makes things approximate so nicely one to another, as to leave no gap or chasm.

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One other instance of a connection which produceth a sense of obligation, shall suffice. In the general case, of procuring positive good to others, or advancing happiness, without any connection, save merely that of humanity, it is self-approbation, and not strict obligation, that is felt. But let us put the case of a person in distress. By this single circumstance, though it forms no intimate connection, the moral sense is influenced, and now it becomes a positive duty to exert our benevolence, by affording relief. The neglect of this duty is attended with remorse and self-condemnation; though possibly not of so strong a kind as where we betray our trust, or are the authors of positive mischief to others. Thus charity is, by all mankind, considered as a duty to which we are strictly bound.

WITH respect to principles of action which are not enforced by the consciousness of duty, these we may restrain at our pleasure, but may not always indulge at our pleasure. For in many circumstances the moral sense interposes, and forbids the gratification. Self-preservation is the strongest of all our principles of action, and the means are infinite which may be put in motion for that end. Yet here the moral sense frequently interposes, and even for the preservation of our lives, gives no indulgence to the transgression of any positive duty. Self-preservation, however it may alleviate, will not justify any  
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wrong done to an innocent person. It will not justify treachery, nor any unjust action. And this is another instance of the admirable correspondence of the moral sense with the external circumstances of man as a social being. For it is essential to society, that the social duties should be indispensable; and it is agreeable to good order, that the interest of an individual should yield to that of the whole. The doctrine thus laid down in general, may, I am sensible, be liable to misconstruction; and therefore it must be further explained. Self-preservation, it is certain, will not justify any immoral action. But then, in the circumstances of imminent danger, several actions become lawful, which are unlawful in ordinary circumstances. For example, to prevent dying of hunger, a man may take food at short-hand where-ever he can find it, without consulting the proprietor. Seizing upon what belongs to another, is in ordinary circumstances an unlawful act: but in a case which can bear no delay, the act is lawful, because the approbation of the proprietor will be presumed. At any rate, it is his duty to relieve the distressed; and what he ought to give, may justly be forced from him at short-hand, where the delay of applying to a judge would be fatal. Another example, is the case of two men in a shipwreck, laying hold at the same instant of a plank which cannot support both. In this case it becomes lawful to struggle for the sole possession,

sion, though one must perish in the struggle : for each has an equal title to act for self-preservation ; and if both cannot be preserved, mere force is the only method by which the dispute can be determined. Upon this signal authority of the moral sense to restrain the exercise of this class of principles, nothing further is necessary to be said, but only that if it possess this authority over the principle of self-preservation, its authority must, if possible, be still more complete over the weaker principle of self-love, and others which belong to the same class.

THESE are the outlines of the laws which govern our actions, comprehending what we *may* do, what we *ought* to do, and what we *ought not* to do. The two latter, as matter of duty, are the proper objects of law, natural and municipal. And no more seems to be requisite in this matter, than clearly to point out our duty, by informing us of what we ought to do, and what we ought not to do ; seeing actions which come not under the character of duty, may be safely left to our own choice. With regard then to what may be called our duty, the first and primary law is the law of restraint, by which we are prohibited to hurt others in their persons, goods, or whatever else is dear to them. This is a law which dictates to us what ought not to be done ; and so sacred it is, as to yield to none of our principles of action, not even

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that of self-preservation. The second, which is a law dictating what we ought to do, binds us to the performance of our promises and covenants. Veracity, descending in a scale of laws, occupies the next place. This law excludes not fable, nor any liberty of speech which tends to amusement. It excludes deceit only, and obliges us in all cases to adhere to truth where truth is expected from us. Fidelity is a fourth law, not less vigorous, though more confined, than veracity; for, as observed above, fidelity presupposes a peculiar connection betwixt two persons, to found a reliance on the one side, and on the other an obligation to fulfil what is justly expected. Gratitude comes next, limited, like fidelity, to particular objects, but more arbitrary as to what it requires of us. Gratitude, without doubt, is strictly our duty; but the measure of performance, and the kind, is left pretty much in our own choice. Benevolence occupies the last place; which, considered abstractly, is not a positive duty. But there are many connections of different sorts, in consequence of which it becomes a duty. For the sake of illustration I shall slightly mention a few. The connection of parent and child is one of the strongest, for it makes mutual benevolence an indispensable duty. Benevolence among other blood-relations becomes also our duty in many particular circumstances, though here it is seldom that we feel ourselves so firmly bound as we are when engaged

ged in the former connection. Many are the connections, some intimate, some more slight, which come under the law of equity, and which bind us to the performance of certain acts of benevolence. I shall add but one connection more, *viz.* that which subsists betwixt us and a person in distress. Benevolence in this case becomes the duty of every one who can afford relief.

THESE several laws are admirably adjusted to our nature and circumstances, and tend in the most perfect manner to promote the ends of society. In the first place, as man is limited with regard to power and capacity, the foregoing laws are accommodated to his nature, ordering and forbidding nothing but what falls within his compass. In the second place, peace and security in society are amply provided for, by tying up the hands, as it were, of every person from harming others. In the third place, man is prompted in an admirable manner to be useful to others. It is his positive duty to relieve the distressed, and to perform his engagements. Boundless are the good offices which are enforced by veracity, fidelity, and gratitude. We are further incited to do all the good we can, by the pleasure which arises from being useful, and by grateful returns from the persons obliged. And, lastly, in competition betwixt a man himself and others, though his principles of action directed upon himself, may be stronger than

those directed upon others, the superior rewards bestowed by the constitution of our nature upon the latter, may be deemed a sufficient counterbalance to give an ascendant to the social affections, even such of them as are left to our own choice, and are not enforced by a consciousness of duty.

IT may seem strange, that the municipal law of all countries is so little regardful of the laws of nature, as to adopt but a very few of them. There never was a general law in any country, to punish ingratitude, if it was not among the ancient Persians. There is no positive law to enforce compassion, and to relieve those in distress, if the maintenance of the poor be excepted, which, in some countries, is provided for by law. No notice is taken of breach of friendship, by statute, nor of the duty we owe our children, further than of supporting them while they are under age. But municipal laws, being of human invention, are of no great extent. They cannot reach the heart, nor its intentions, further than as expressed by outward acts. And these are to be judged of cautiously, and with reserve; because they form a language, dark, and at best full of ambiguities. At the same time, the object of human laws is man, considered singly in the quality of a citizen. When society is formed, and government submitted to, every private right, inconsistent with society and government,

government, is surrendered. But, in every other respect, individuals reserve their independency and their private rights. Whether a man be virtuous, is not the concern of the society, at least not of its laws ; but only whether he transgresses those regulations, which are necessary to the preservation of society. In this view, great attention is given by the legislature in every country, to enforce the natural law of restraint from mutual hurt and injury. The like attention is given, to enforce the natural obligation of engagements, and of fidelity, at least so far as relates to commerce ; for infidelity in love and friendship are left to the natural law. Ingratitude is not punished by human laws, because it may be guarded against by positive engagements ; nor hard-heartedness with regard to objects of distress ; because society may subsist without such a law, and mankind are scarce yet arrived at such refinement in manners, as to have an abhorrence of this crime, sufficient to make it an object of human punishment.

THERE is another substantial reason, which confines municipal laws within a much narrower compass than the laws of nature. It is essential to municipal laws, that they be clear, plain, and readily applicable to particular cases ; without which judges would be arbitrary, and law made a handle for oppression. For this reason, none of our actions can be the object of positive law,



but what are reducible to a precise rule. Ingratitude therefore cannot be the object of municipal laws, because the quality of the crime depends upon a multiplicity of circumstances, which can never be reduced to a precise rule. Duty to our children, friends, and relations, is, with regard to most circumstances, in the same case. The duty of relieving the distressed, in like manner, depends upon many circumstances; the nature of the distress, the connection betwixt the parties, the opportunity and ability of affording relief. The abstinence from mutual harm, and the performance of promises, are capable to be brought under a precise rule, and consequently to be objects of municipal law. The chief attention of the legislature in all countries, was at first to explain and enforce the natural law of restraint, without which society cannot have a being. Municipal law was afterwards extended to support promises and covenants, and to enforce performance, without which society may exist, but cannot flourish. Gradual improvements in the arts of life, have in later times extended municipal law still farther. The duty of benevolence arising from certain peculiar connections among individuals, is susceptible in many cases of a precise rule. So far benevolence is also taken under the authority of the legislature, and enforced by rules passing commonly under the name of the law of equity.

C H A P.

## C H A P. IX.

*Of the LAW of NATIONS.*

**I**F we can trust history, the original inhabitants of this earth were a brutish and savage race. And we have little reason to doubt of the fact, when, even at this day, we find in distant corners the same sort of people, who have no communication with the rest of mankind. The state of nature is accordingly represented by most writers, as a state of war; nothing going on but rapine and bloodshed. From this picture of the first men, one would be apt to conclude, that man is a wild and rapacious animal, little better than a beast of prey, till he be moulded by society into a rational creature. If this conclusion be just, we cannot help being in some pain for the principles above laid down. Brutish manners imply brutish principles of action; and, from this view of the original state of mankind, it might seem that moral virtues are not natural, but acquired by means of education and example in a well-regulated society; in a word, that the whole moral part of the human system is artificial, as justice is represented by a late writer.

**BUT** to be satisfied of the fallacy of this conclusion,

clusion, we need only look back to what has already been said upon the moral sense. If the perception of beauty and deformity in external existences be natural to man, the perception of beauty and deformity, and of a *right* and *wrong*, in actions, is equally so. And indeed, whatever be the influence of education and example, it is an evident truth, that they never can have power to create any one sense or perception. They may well cherish and improve the plants of nature's formation; but they cannot introduce any new or original plant whatever. We must therefore attribute the foregoing appearances to some other cause than want of the moral sense; and these appearances may easily be explained, from peculiar circumstances, that overbalance the moral sense, and produce, in appearance, the same effects which would result from a total absence of that sense. Let us point out these circumstances; for the subject is worthy of our strictest attention. In the first place, we must look back to the original state of man, destitute entirely of those arts which produce the conveniencies of life. In this state, man, a most indigent creature, would be incited by self-preservation, to supply his wants the best way he could, without much obstruction from the moral sense. Disputes and differences would multiply, which behoved all to be determined by the strong-hand; there being no established rules of conduct to appeal to, nor judges to apply rules to particular cases.

cases. In this state, barbarity, roughness, and cruelty, formed the character of the human species. For, in the practice and habit of war, the malevolent principles gain strength and vigour, as the benevolent principles do, by the arts of peace. And to this consideration may be added, that man is by nature shy and timorous, and consequently cruel when he gets the upper-hand. The security obtained in a regular society puts an end, in a great measure, to our fears. Man becomes a magnanimous and generous being, not easily daunted, and therefore not easily provoked to acts of cruelty.

It may be observed, in the next place, that the rude and illiterate are governed by their appetites and passions, more than by general principles. We have our first impressions from external objects. It is by education and practice that we acquire a facility in forming complex ideas, and abstract propositions. The ideas of a common interest, of a country, of a people, of a society under government, of public good, are complex, and not soon acquired even by the thinking part of mankind. They are scarce ever acquired by the rude and illiterate; and consequently can scarce make any impression on them. One's own interest, considered in general, is too complex an object for the bulk of mankind; and therefore it is, that appetites and passions, aiming at particular objects, are stronger motives

tives to action with the ignorant and unthinking, than the principle of self-love, or even of self-preservation, when it is not excited by some object which threatens danger. And the same must hold more strongly with regard to the affections of benevolence, charity, and such like, when there is no particular object in view, but only, in general, the good of others.

MAN is a complex machine, composed of various principles of motion, which may be conceived as so many springs or weights, counter-acting or balancing one another. These being accurately adjusted, the movement of life is beautiful, because regular and uniform. But if some springs or weights be withdrawn, those which remain, acting now without opposition from their antagonist forces, will disorder the balance, and derange the whole machine. Remove those principles of action, which being directed upon general and complex objects, are conducted by reflection, and the force of the appetites and passions, which act by blind impulse, will, of course, be doubled. This is precisely the condition of those, who, abandoning the authority of reason, surrender themselves to every appetite. They are tyrannized by passion, and have no consistent rule of conduct. It is no cause of wonder, that the moral sense should not have sufficient authority to command obedience in such a case. This is the character of savages.

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We have no reason then to conclude, from the foregoing picture, that even the greatest savages are destitute of the moral sense. Their defect rather lies in the weakness of their general principles of action, which are directed upon objects too complex for savages readily to comprehend. This defect is remedied by education and reflection; and then it is, that the moral sense, in concert with these general principles, acquires its full authority, which is openly recognised, and cheerfully submitted to.

THE contemplation is beautiful, when we compare our gradual improvement in knowledge and in morality. We begin with surveying particular objects, and lay in a stock of simple ideas. Our affections keep pace, being all directed to particular objects; and during this period, we are governed chiefly by our passions and appetites. So soon as we begin to form complex and general ideas, these also become the objects of our affections. Then it is, that love to our country begins to exert itself, benevolence to our neighbours and acquaintances, affection for our relations as such. We acquire by degrees the taste of public good, and of being useful in life. The pleasures of society are more and more relished, selfish passions are tamed and subdued, and social affections gain the ascendant. We refine upon the pleasures of society, because our happiness consists chiefly in social intercourse.

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We learn to submit our opinions. We affect to give preference to others, and readily accommodate ourselves to every thing which may render society more complete. The malevolent passions, above all, are brought under the strictest discipline, if not totally eradicated. Instead of unbounded revenge for the smallest injury, we acquire a degree of self-denial to overlook trifling wrongs, and in greater wrongs to be satisfied with moderate reparation.

THE moral sense also, though rooted in the nature of man, admits of great refinements by culture and education. It improves gradually, like our other powers and faculties, till it comes to be productive of the strongest as well as most delicate feelings. I will endeavour to explain in what manner this happens. Every one must be sensible of the great advantages of education and imitation. The most polished nations differ only from savages in refinement of taste, which being productive of nice and delicate feelings, is the source of pleasure and pain, more exquisite than savages are susceptible of. Hence it is, that many actions which make little impression upon savages, appear to us elegant and beautiful; as, on the other hand, actions which give them no pain, raise in us aversion and disgust. This may be illustrated by a comparison betwixt the English and French dramatic performances. The English, a rough and hardy  
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people, take delight in representations, which more refined manners render insupportable to their neighbours. The distresses, on the other hand, represented on the French theatre, are too slight for an English audience. Their passions are not raised; they feel no concern. In general, horror, which denotes the highest degree of pain and aversion that can be raised by a harsh action, is an emotion seldom felt among fierce and savage nations, where humanity is little regarded. But when the tender affections are improved by society, horror is more easily raised, and objects which move horror, become more frequent.

THE moral sense not only accompanies our other senses in their gradual refinement, but receives additional strength upon every occasion from these other senses. For example, a savage inured to acts of cruelty, feels little pain or aversion in putting an enemy to death in cold blood; and consequently will have no remorse at such an action, other than what proceeds from the moral sense acting by its native strength. But let us suppose a person of so delicate feelings, as scarce to endure a common operation of phlebotomy, and who cannot behold, without some degree of horror, the amputation of a fractured member; such a person will be shocked to the highest degree, if he see an enemy put to death in cold blood. The grating emotion, thus raised

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fed in him, must communicate itself to the feelings of the moral sense, and render them much more acute. And thus, refinement in taste and manners, operating by communication upon the moral sense, occasions a stronger perception of immorality in every vitious action, than what would arise before such refinement. At the same time, the moral sense improves in its delicacy, as well as the other senses; whereby a double effect is produced, owing to a double cause. And therefore, upon the whole, the operations of the moral sense in a savage, bear no proportion to its operations in a person who stands possessed of all the advantages of which human nature is susceptible by refined education.

I NEVER was satisfied with the description given of the law of nations, commonly so called, That it is a law established among nations by common consent, for regulating their conduct with regard to each other. This foundation of the law of nations I take to be chimerical. For upon what occasion was this covenant made, and by whom? If it be said, that the sense of common good gradually brought this law into force; I answer, that the sense of common good is too complex, and too remote an object, to be a solid foundation for any positive law, if it has no other foundation in our nature. But there is no necessity to recur to so slender a foundation. What is just now observed, will lead us to

a more rational account of these laws. They are no other but gradual refinements of the original law of nature, accommodating itself to the improved state of mankind. The law of nature, which is the law of our nature, cannot be stationary. It must vary with the nature of man, and consequently refine gradually as human nature refines. Putting an enemy to death in cold blood, is at present looked upon with distaste and horror, and therefore is immoral; though it was not always so in the same degree. It is considered as barbarous and inhuman, to fight with poisoned weapons, and therefore is more remarkably disapproved by the moral sense than it was originally. Influenced by general objects, we have enmity against France, which is our natural enemy. But this enmity is not directed against individuals; conscious, as we are, that it is the duty of subjects to serve their king and country. Therefore we treat prisoners of war with humanity. And now it is creeping in among civilized nations, that, in war, a cartel should be established for exchange of prisoners. The function of an ambassador has ever been held sacred. To treat him ill was originally immoral; because it is treating as an enemy the man who comes to us with friendly intentions. But the improved manners of latter times have refined upon the privileges of an ambassador, and extended them far beyond what they were originally. It is very true, that these refinements

of the law of nature gain strength and firmness by custom. Hereby they acquire the additional support of common consent. For as every nation trusts that these laws will be observed, it is upon that account a breach of faith to transgress them. But this is not peculiar to these particular institutions which pass under the name of the law of nations. There is the same adventitious foundation for all the laws of nature, which every man trusts will be observed, and upon that faith directs his conduct.

ESSAY

## E S S A Y III.

*Of LIBERTY and NECESSITY.*

**W**HEN we apply our thoughts to the contemplation of final causes, no subject more readily presents itself than the material world, which is stamped with the brightest characters of wisdom and goodness. The moral world, being less in view, hath been generally overlooked, though it yields not to the other in rich materials. Man's inward system, accurately surveyed, will be found not less admirable than the external system, of which he makes a part. The subject is the more curious, that the traces of wisdom and design discernible in our internal frame, lie more out of common sight. They are touches, as it were, of a finer pencil, and of a nicer hand, than are discovered in the material world. Thought is more subtile than motion; and more of exquisite art is displayed in the laws of voluntary action, than there is place for in adjusting the laws of mere matter.

AN extreme beautiful scene opens to our view, when we consider with what propriety the ideas, feelings, and whole constitution of the mind of man, correspond to his present state. The impressions he receives, and the notions he

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forms, are accurately adapted to the useful purposes of life, though they correspond not, in every instance, to the philosophic truth of things. It was not intended that man should make profound discoveries. He is framed to be more an active than a contemplative being; and his views are so adjusted, as to be made subservient to correctness of action rather than of belief. Several instances there are of perceptions, which, for want of a more proper term, must be called deceitful or delusive\*; because they differ from the real truth. But man is not thereby in the least misled. On the contrary, the ends of life and action are better provided for by such artifice, than if these perceptions were more exact copies of their objects.

IN the material world, somewhat of this kind is generally admitted by modern philosophers. It is found, that the representations of external objects, and their qualities, conveyed by the senses, differ sometimes from what philosophy discovers these objects and their qualities to be. Thus, a surface appears smooth and uniform, when its roughness is not such as to be hurtful.

\* I am sensible that these terms are unhappy, because they are generally taken in a bad sense. Let it only be considered, that in Latin there is a *dolus bonus* as well as a *dolus malus*. By the art of perspective painting, a plain surface appears raised, and an object near the eye appears at a great distance. We are deceived, it is true; but the deceit contributes to our entertainment.

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The same surface, examined with a microscope, is found to be full of ridges and hollows. Were man endued with a microscopic eye, the bodies that surround him would appear not less different from what they do at present, than if he were transported into another world. His ideas, upon that supposition, would indeed be more agreeable to strict truth, but they would be far less serviceable in common life. It is now universally admitted, that the qualities called secondary, which we by natural instinct attribute to matter, belong not properly to matter, nor exist really without us. It is a wonderful artifice, to present objects to us thus differently distinguished; to mark them out to the eye in various attires, so as to be best known and remembered; and to paint on the fancy, gay and lively, grand and striking, or sober and melancholy scenes: whence many of our most agreeable and most affecting emotions arise. Colour, in particular, is a beauty which nature hath spread upon all her works. Yet all this beauty of colours, with which heaven and earth appear clothed, is a sort of romance or illusion. For among external objects, to which colours are attributed by sense, there is really no other distinction than what ariseth from a difference in the size and arrangement of the constituent parts, whereby the rays of light are reflected or refracted in such different ways, as to produce in the mind a peculiar perception, which is termed *colour*. From this,  
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and other instances of the same kind which might be given, it appears, that our perceptions, sometimes, are less accommodated to the truth of things, than to the end for which our senses are intended. Nature, at the same time, hath provided a remedy; for she seldom or never leaves us without means of discovering the deception, and arriving at the truth. And it is wonderful, that even when we act upon these deceitful impressions, we are not betrayed into any thing that is hurtful. On the contrary, life and action are better provided for, and the ends of our being fulfilled to more advantage, than if we conducted ourselves by rigid truth.

LET us carry on this speculation from the material to the moral world, in order to examine, whether there may not be here also analogous instances of delusive impressions. This will lead us into an unbeaten track. If, in following this track, the reader shall stumble upon any object that is altogether new or singular, let him guard against surprise, and suspend a final judgment, till he have leisurely reviewed the whole.

THAT nothing can happen without a cause, is a principle embraced by all men, the illiterate and ignorant as well as the learned. Nothing that happens is conceived as happening of itself, but as an *effect* produced by some other thing. However ignorant of the cause, we notwithstanding

ing conclude, that every event must have a cause. We should perhaps be at a loss to deduce this principle from any premisses, by a chain of reasoning. But perception affords conviction, where reason leaves us in the dark. We perceive the proposition to be true. And indeed a sentiment common to all, must be founded on the common nature of all. Curiosity is one of the earliest emotions that are discovered in children; and about nothing are they more curious, than to have causes and reasons given them, why such a thing happened, or how it came about. Historians and politicians make it their chief concern, to trace the causes of actions, the most mysterious not excepted. Be an event ever so extraordinary, the sense of its being an effect, is not in the least weakened, even with the vulgar; who, rather than assign no cause, recur to the operation of invisible powers. What is a cause with respect to its proper effect, is considered as an effect with respect to some prior cause, and so backward, without end. Events thus viewed, in a chain of causes and effects, should naturally be considered, one would think, as necessary and fixed: for the relation betwixt a cause and its effect implies somewhat precise and determinate, and leads our thoughts to what must be, and cannot be otherways than it is.

THAT we have such a sense as is above described, cannot be controverted; and yet, when we



we search farther into human nature, a sense of an opposite kind is discovered, a sense of chance or contingency in events; which is not less deeply rooted in our nature than the former. However strange it may appear, that man should be composed of such inconsistencies, the fact must notwithstanding be admitted. This sense of chance or contingency is most conspicuous when we look forward to future events. Some things we indeed always consider as certain or necessary; such as, the revolution of seasons, and the rising and setting of the sun. These, as experience teacheth, are regulated by fixed laws. But many things appear to us loose, fortuitous, uncertain; uncertain not only with respect to us, on account of our ignorance of the cause, but uncertain in themselves, or not tied down, and predetermined to fall out, by any invariable law. We naturally make a distinction betwixt things that *must be*, and things that *may be*, or *may not be*. Thus, with respect to future events, we have a sense of chance, or of contingency, which seems to banish the other sense, of the dependency of events upon precise and determinate causes.

WHEN we consider in what view our own actions are perceived by the mind, there is somewhat equally strange and mysterious. It is admitted by all men, that we act from motives. The plain man, as well as the philosopher, perceives

ceives the connection betwixt an action and its motive to be so strong, that, from this perception, both of them reason with full confidence about the future actions of others. That an avaritious man will take every fair opportunity of acquiring riches, is as little doubted, as that rain and sun-shine will make plants grow. The motive of gain is judged to operate, as certainly and infallibly, upon his temper, as heat and moisture upon the soil, each to produce its proper effect. If we are uncertain what part any particular man will act, the uncertainty ariseth, not from our doubting whether he will act from a motive; for this is never called in question. It ariseth from our not being able to judge, what the motive is, which, in his present circumstances, will prevail. It being then a natural sense, that actions are so connected with their proper motives, as necessarily to arise from the temper, character, and other circumstances of the agent, it should seem, that all the train of human actions would occur to our minds as necessary and fixed. Yet human actions do not always appear to us in this light. Previous to any particular action, we indeed always judge, that it will be the necessary result of some motive. But in a retrospect the judgment seems to vary. Hath a man done what is wrong and shameful? we accuse, and we condemn him, for acting the wrong and shameful part. We conceive that he had power to act otherways,  
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and *ought* to have acted otherways. The whole train of our perceptions, in a moment, accommodate themselves to the supposition of his being a free agent.

THESE are phænomena in human nature of a singular kind; perceptions which clash with each other; every past event admitted to have a necessary cause, and yet many future events supposed contingent; every future action admitted to be necessary, and yet many actions, in an after view, judged free. Our perceptions are no doubt the test of truth; which is so evident, that, in many instances, no other means are afforded us for coming at the truth. The few exceptions that are discovered by reason or experience, serve the more to confirm the general rule. But the perceptions we have now laid open can be no test of truth; because, in contradictory propositions, truth cannot lie on both sides. There is no other way to get out of this labyrinth of doubts and difficulties, but to enter upon a strict survey both of the material and moral world, which may possibly lead to a discovery of what is really the truth of the matter. Let us then proceed, with impartiality and attention, to inquire what we are to believe concerning contingency in events, and liberty or necessity in human actions: whether our perceptions can be reconciled to each other, and reconciled to truth; or whether there be not here  
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Some of those delusive perceptions which, in other instances above hinted, belong to our nature.

TAKING a view of the material world, we find all things there proceeding in a fixed and settled train of causes and effects. It is a point which admits not of dispute, that all the changes produced in matter, and all the different modifications it assumes, are the result of fixed laws. Every effect is so precisely determined, that no other effect could, in such circumstances, have possibly resulted from the operation of the cause : which holds even in the minutest changes of the different elements, as all philosophers admit. Casual and fluctuating as these seem, even their slightest variations are the result of pre-established laws. There is a chain of causes and effects which hang one upon another, running through this whole system ; and not the smallest link of the chain can be broken, without altering the whole constitution of things, or suspending the regular operation of the laws of nature. Here then, in the material world, there is nothing that can be called *contingent* ; nothing that is left loose ; but every thing must be precisely what it is, and be found in that state in which we find it.

IN the moral world, this necessary chain of causes and effects appears not so clearly. Man is the actor here. He is endued with will,

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and he acts from choice. He hath a power of beginning motion, which is subject to no mechanical laws; and therefore he is not under what is called physical necessity. He hath appetites and passions which prompt him to their respective gratifications: but he is under no necessity of blindly submitting to their impulse. For reason hath a power of restraint. It suggests motives from the cool views of good and evil. He deliberates upon these. In consequence of his deliberation he chuseth: and here, if any where, lies our liberty. Let us examine to what this liberty amounts. That motives have some influence in determining the mind, is certain; and that they have this influence in different degrees, is equally certain. The sense of honour and gratitude; for example, are powerful motives with a man to serve a friend. Let the man's private interest concur; and the motives become more powerful. Add the certain prospect of poverty, shame, or bodily suffering, if he shall act a different part; and you leave him no choice; the motives to action are rendered irresistible. Motives being once allowed to have a determining influence in any degree, it is easy to suppose the influence so augmented, whether of the same or of accumulated motives, as to leave little freedom to the mind, or rather none at all. In such a case, there is no denying that we are under a necessity to act. And though this, to be sure, is not physical necessity, as arising,

sing, not from the laws of matter, but from the constitution of the mind ; yet in this case the consequence is not less certain, fixed, and unavoidable, than in that of physical necessity. So evident this is, that, in some instances, moral and physical necessity seem to coincide, or scarcely to be distinguished. A criminal walks to the scaffold in the midst of his guards. No man will deny that he is under an absolute necessity in this case. Why ? because he knows, that if he refuse to go, they will drag him. I ask, Is this a physical, or a moral necessity ? The answer, at first view, is not obvious ; for the distinction betwixt these two seems lost. And yet, strictly speaking, it is only a moral necessity : for it is the force of a motive which determines the criminal to walk to the scaffold ; to wit, that resistance is vain, because the guards can neither be resisted nor corrupted. The idea of necessity, however, in the minds of the spectators, when they view the criminal in this situation, is not less strong, than if they saw him bound, and carried on a sledge. Nothing is more common, than to talk of an action which one must do, and cannot avoid. He was compelled to it, we say, and it was impossible he could act otherwise ; when, at the same time, all the compulsion we mean, is only the application of some very strong motive to the mind. This shows, that, in the judgment of all mankind, a motive may, in certain circumstances, carry in it the

power of rendering an action necessary. In other words, we expect such an action in consequence of such a motive, with equal confidence, as when we expect to see a stone fall to the ground when it is dropped from the hand.

THIS, it will be said, may hold in some instances, but not in all. For, in the greater part of human actions, there is really a sense of liberty. When the mind hesitates betwixt two things, examines and compares, and at last resolves, is there any compulsion or necessity here? No compulsion, it is granted; but as to necessity, let us pause, and examine more accurately. The resolution being taken, the choice being made, upon what is it founded? Certainly upon some reason or motive, however silent or weak. No man in his senses ever made choice of one thing before another, without being able to assign a reason, weak or strong, for the preference. It would be a pregnant mark of idiocy, to say that one has come to a resolution and cannot say why. If this be an undoubted fact, it follows of consequence, that the determination must result from that motive which has the greatest influence for the time; or from what appears the best and most eligible upon the whole. If motives be different with regard to strength and influence, which is plainly the case; it is involved in the very idea of the strongest motive, that it must have the strongest effect in determining the mind.

mind. This can no more be doubted, than that, in a balance, the greater weight must turn the scale.

HERE perhaps we shall be interrupted. Men are not always rational in their determinations : they often act from whim, passion, humour, motives loose and variable as the wind. This is admitted. But suppose the motive which determines the mind, to be as whimsical and unreasonable as you please ; its influence, however, is equally necessary with that of the most rational motive. An indolent man, for example, is incited to action, by the strongest considerations, which reason, virtue, interest, can suggest. He wavers and hesitates ; at last resists them all, and folds his arms. What is the cause of this odd choice ? Is it that he is less under the power of motives than another man ? By no means. The love of rest is his motive, his prevailing passion : and this is as effectual to fix him in his place, as the love of glory or riches are, to render active the vain or the covetous. In short, if motives be not under our power or direction, which is confessedly the fact, we can, at bottom, have no liberty. In acting by blind impulse or instinct, which is sometimes the case, there is obviously no liberty ; and with regard to matters which admit deliberation and choice, such is our constitution, that we cannot exert a single action, but with some view, aim, or purpose. At the



same time, when two opposite motives present themselves, we have not the power of an arbitrary choice. We are necessarily determined to prefer the stronger motive.

IT is true, that, in disputing upon this subject of human liberty, a man may attempt to show, that motives have no necessary influence, by eating perhaps the worst apple that is before him, or, in some such trifling instance, preferring an obviously less good to a greater. But is it not plain, that the humor of showing that he can act against motives, is, in this case, the very motive of the whimsical preference?

A COMPARISON instituted betwixt moral and physical necessity may possibly throw additional light upon this subject. Where the motives to any action are perfectly full, cogent, and clear, the sense of liberty, as we showed before, entirely vanisheth. In other cases, where the field of choice is wider, and where opposite motives counterbalance and work against each other, the mind fluctuates for a while, and feels itself more loose: but, in the end, must as necessarily be determined to the side of the most powerful motive, as the balance, after several vibrations, must incline to the side of the preponderating weight. The laws of mind, and the laws of matter, are in this respect perfectly similar; though, in making the comparison, we are apt  
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to deceive ourselves. In forming a notion of physical necessity, we seldom think of any force, but what hath visibly a full effect. A man in prison, or tied to a post, must remain there. If he be dragged along, he cannot resist. Whereas motives, which, from the highest to the lowest, are very different, do not always produce sensible effects. Yet, when the comparison is accurately instituted, the very same thing holds in the actions of matter. A weak motive makes some impression: but, in opposition to one more powerful, it has no effect to determine the mind. In the precise same manner, a small force will not overcome a great resistance; nor the weight of an ounce in one scale, counterbalance a pound in the other. Comparing together the actions of mind and of matter, similar causes will, in both equally, produce similar effects.

BUT admitting all that hath been contended for, of the necessary influence of motives, to bring on the choice or last judgment of the understanding, it is urged by Dr Clarke, that man is still a free agent, because he hath a power of acting, or beginning motion, according to his will. In this he placeth human liberty, that motives are not physical efficient causes of motion\*. We agree with the Doctor, that the im-

\* Vid. his demonstration of the being and attributes, p. 565. fol. edit. and his answer to Collins *passim*.

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mediate efficient cause of motion, is not the motive, but the will to act. No person ever held, that the pleasure of a summer-evening, when a man goes abroad into the fields, is the immediate cause of the motion of his limbs. But what doth this observation avail, when the prevailing motive, the will to act, and the action itself, are three things inseparably linked together? The motive, according to his own confession, necessarily determines the will; and the will necessarily produces the action, unless it be obstructed by some foreign force. Is not the action, by consequence, as necessary, as the will to act; though the motive be the immediate cause of the will only, and not of the action, or beginning of motion? What doth this author gain, by showing, that we have a power of beginning motion, if that power never is, never can be, exerted, unless in consequence of some volition or choice, which is necessarily caused? "But," says he, "it is only a moral necessity which is produced by motives; and a moral necessity is no necessity at all, being consistent with the highest liberty." If these words have any meaning, the dispute is at an end. For moral necessity, being that sort of necessity which affects the mind, and physical necessity that which affects matter, it is plain, that, in all reasonings concerning human liberty, moral necessity, and no other, is meant to be established. The laws of action, we say, which respect the  
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human mind, are as fixed as those which respect matter. The different nature of these laws occasions the fixed consequences of the one to be called *moral*, and of the other to be called *physical necessity*. But the idea of *necessary, certain, unavoidable*, equally agrees to both. And to say that moral necessity is no necessity at all, because it is not physical necessity, which is all that the Doctor's argument amounts to, is no better, than to argue, that physical necessity is no necessity at all, because it is not moral necessity.

ONE great source of confusion, in reflecting upon this subject, seems to be, our not distinguishing betwixt *necessity* and *constraint*. In common language, these are used as equivalent terms; but they ought to be distinguished when we treat of this subject. A person having a strong desire to escape, remains in prison because the doors are guarded. Finding his keepers gone, he makes his escape. His escape now is as necessary, *i. e.* as certain and infallible a consequence of the circumstances he finds himself in, as his confinement was before; though in the one case there is constraint, in the other none. When, being under no constraint, we act according to our inclination and choice, our actions, in one sense, may justly be reckoned free. But in another sense they are strictly necessary; because  
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every inclination and choice is unavoidably caused or occasioned by the prevailing motive.

THE preceding reasonings may perhaps make a stronger impression, by being reduced into a short argument, after the following manner. When a being acts merely by instinct, and without any view to consequences, every one must see, and acknowledge, that the being acts necessarily. Though not so obvious, the case comes to the same, where an action is exerted in order to bring about some end or event. This end or event must be the object of desire; for no man in his senses, who uses means in order to a certain end, but must wish or desire the means to be effectual. If we do not desire to accomplish an event, we cannot possibly act in order to bring it about. Desire and action are then intimately connected; so intimately, that no action can ever be exerted where there is no antecedent desire. The event is first the object of desire, and then we act in order to bring it about. This being so, it follows clearly, that our actions cannot be free in any sense opposed to their being morally necessary. Our desires obviously are not under our own power, but are raised by means that depend not upon us. And if our desires are not under our power, neither can our actions be under our power. Liberty, as opposed to moral necessity, if it have any meaning, must signify a power to act in contradiction to desire; or,

or, in other words, a power to act in contradiction to any view, purpose, or design, we can have in acting; which power, besides that no man was ever conscious of it, seems to be an absurdity altogether inconsistent with a rational nature.

WITH regard to things supposed so equal as to found no preference of one to another, it is not necessary to enter into any intricate inquiry, how the mind in such cases is directed. Though it should be admitted, that where there is no sort of motive to influence the mind, it may act arbitrarily; this would not affect the preceding reasonings; in which the existence of a motive being once supposed, we have shown the mind to be necessarily determined. Objects so balanced one against another, with perfect equality, if such instances are to be found, must be so few, and in matters so trivial, (as in the common instance of eggs), that they cannot have any considerable influence upon the chain of causes and effects. It may well admit of a doubt, whether the mind be, in any case, left altogether destitute of a motive to determine its choice betwixt two objects. For though the objects should in themselves be perfectly equal, yet various circumstances, arising from minute unobserved specialties of fancy, custom, proximity of place, &c. may turn the scale in favour of one of the objects. In this state of suspense, betwixt two  
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things equally balanced, the uneasiness one feels, searching and casting about for some ground of choice, proves, that to act altogether arbitrarily is unnatural, and that our constitution fits us to be determined by motives.

As there is scarce room for overdoing in explaining the doctrine of necessity, which in some particulars goes cross to the common notions of mankind ; I shall endeavour to set it in a clear light, by opposing it to physical necessity. Formerly I showed their resemblance, in the article of necessity : I now again compare them, to show in what circumstances they differ. In the first place, a man under the influence of a physical cause is passive : he is acted upon, and doth not act. Under the influence of a moral cause, he himself acts ; and the moral cause operates, by influencing and determining him to act. Secondly, a physical cause is generally exerted against a man's inclination and will. If the force applied overcome his resistance, he must submit ; and in this case, the necessity is involuntary. It is constraint or coercion. Physical necessity, however, is not always involuntary. Force may be applied to bring about an event which is agreeable. In this case the necessity is *voluntary*. A ship having, in a storm, lost its masts and rigging, is driven towards the port by a violent wind : the seamen being under the power of a physical necessity, are entirely passive ; but their  
desire

desire is to be on shore. The necessity they are under, corresponds with their desire, and is thereby *voluntary*. Elias was translated to heaven in a chariot of fire. The necessity was physical, but it was also voluntary. On the other hand, moral necessity is always *voluntary*. A moral cause operates not by force or coercion, but by solicitation and persuasion. It applies to the judgment, and generally affords conviction. But whether or not, it never fails to succeed with the sensitive part of our nature, by raising desire; and when a man is under no restraint, he naturally and necessarily proceeds to action, in order to accomplish his desire. The action is performed as a means to an end. It is directed by will, and is in the strictest sense voluntary. It is at the same time necessary: for such is the nature of man, that desire always determines the will. Thirdly, physical necessity, except when voluntary, which rarely happens, is extremely disagreeable. But moral necessity, which is always voluntary, is, for that reason, always agreeable. To nothing is human nature more averse than to constraint. On the other hand, our condition is always agreeable when we enjoy the freedom of our own will. Fourthly, a man impelled by a physical cause, and acted upon involuntarily, must be sensible of the force and coercion, and consequently of the necessity he is under. A moral cause is in a very different condition. As it influences by persuasion, and not

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force, it may well be supposed to operate, without discovering itself to be a necessary cause. And, in fact, that it so operates, is evident from constant experience. We have no intuitive perception, nor direct consciousness, of the necessary connection that links will to desire. This connection would to us be a dead secret, were it not brought to light by a long and painful reasoning. And hence the ignorance, almost universal, of our being necessary agents.

AND this luckily suggests a thought, (which is, to compare moral necessity with a power to act against motives, termed commonly *liberty of indifference*. To convince men that they are necessary agents, is, I am sensible, a difficult undertaking. Voluntary necessity is in the course of life never felt; and for this reason, we find in common language no term for it. It is not otherways discoverable, but by deep thinking, and by a long chain of abstract reasoning. It is therefore known to philosophers only, who give it the name of *moral necessity*. Hence it is, that when we talk of necessity, the gross of mankind are apt to take the alarm; because they can form no idea of necessity, different from that of constraint, where the necessity is involuntary. We have thus natural prejudice and prepossession to struggle with, which are not to be surmounted, till the heart be pre-engaged to receive a favourable impression. The comparison proposed

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will, I am hopeful, place moral necessity in a light that will make it be generally relished. Moral necessity, as has been observed, is always agreeable. An action, provided it be voluntary, is not the less agreeable by being necessary. So far from it, that the necessity and agreeableness are inseparable, as proceeding from the same cause. An action is necessary, because it is directed by desire: it is at the same time agreeable, because it tends to the accomplishment of desire. And from this it clearly follows, that the greater the necessity is, the greater must also be the pleasure. And now to the other member of the comparison. It is difficult to form a conception of a power to act, without motives, or any thing to influence the mind. But supposing such a power, it must be devoid of all pleasure or satisfaction, even when exercised without crossing any appetite or passion. It is still more difficult to form a conception of a power to act in contradiction to motives, and consequently in contradiction to desire; for these are inseparable. But such power, if it can exist, must be extremely disagreeable: for here a man acting in contradiction to his desires, must, of course, render himself miserable. In this circumstance, liberty of indifference coincides with physical necessity. For when a man lies open to have his most rational and best-concerted schemes disappointed, it comes to the same in point of distress, whether the disappointment be

occasioned by an internal or an external cause. Would any man desire such a power, could he obtain it by a wish; a power which would form a contradiction in his nature, and be in a great measure subversive of his happiness?

BUT now a thought comes across the mind, which demands attention. How hard is the lot of the human species, to be thus tied down, and fixed by motives; subjected by a necessary law to the choice of evil, if evil happen to be the prevailing motive, or if it mislead us under the form of our greatest interest or good! How happy to have had a free independent power of acting, contrary to motives, when the prevailing motive hath a bad tendency! By this power we might have pushed our way to virtue and happiness, whatever motives were suggested by vice and folly to draw us back; or we might, by arbitrary will, have refrained from acting the bad part, though all the power of motives concurred to urge us on. So far well. But let us see whither this will carry us. This arbitrary power being once supposed, may it not be exerted against good motives as well as bad ones? If it do us good by accident, in restraining us from vice, may it not do us ill by accident, in restraining us from virtue? and so shall we not be thrown loose altogether? At this rate, we could not rely on any man. Promises, oaths, vows, would be vain; for nothing can  
ever

ever bind or fix one who is influenced by no motive. The distinction of characters would be at an end : for a person cannot have a character, who hath no fixed nor uniform principles of action. Nay, moral virtue itself, and all the force of law, rule, and obligation, would, upon this hypothesis, be nothing. For no creature can be the subject of rational or moral government, whose actions, by the constitution of its nature, are independent of motives, and whose will is capricious and arbitrary. To exhort, to instruct, to promise, to threaten, would be to no purpose. In short, such a creature, if such could exist, would be a most bizarre and unaccountable being ; a mere absurdity in nature, whose existence could serve no end. Were we so constituted, as always to be determined by the moral sense, even against the strongest countermotives ; this would be consistent with human nature, because it would preserve entire the connection that, by an unalterable law, is established betwixt the will and the prevailing motive. But to break this connection altogether ; to introduce an unbounded arbitrary liberty, in opposition to which motives should not have influence ; would be, instead of amending, to deform and unhinge the human constitution. No reason have we therefore to regret, that we find the will necessarily subjected to motives ; unless we would rather have man to be a whimsical and ridiculous, than a rational and moral being.

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THUS far have we advanced in our argument, that all human actions proceed in a fixed and necessary train. Man being what he is, a creature endued with a certain degree of understanding, certain passions and principles, and placed in certain circumstances, it is impossible he should will or chuse otherways than in fact he wills or chuses. His mind is passive in receiving impressions of things as good or ill: according to these impressions, the last judgment of the understanding is necessarily formed; which the will, if considered as different from the last judgment of the understanding, necessarily obeys, as is fully shown; and the external action is necessarily connected with the will, or the mind's final determination to act.

IN the course of this reasoning, we have abstracted from all controversies about divine prescience and decree; though in fact, from what hath been proved, it appears, that the Divine Being decrees all future events: for he who gave such a nature to his creatures, and placed them in such circumstances, as that a certain train of actions behoved necessarily to follow; he, I say, who did this, and who must have foreseen the consequences, did certainly resolve or decree, that events should fall out, and men should act as they do. Prescience indeed is not, properly speaking, any cause of events. For events do not happen, because they are foreseen; but

but because they are certainly to happen, therefore they are capable of being foreseen. Though prescience doth not cause, yet it undoubtedly supposes, the certain futuration (as schoolmen speak) of events. And were there not causes which render the existence of future events certain, it would involve a contradiction, to maintain, that future events could be certainly foreseen. But I avoid carrying the reader any further into such thorny disputes.

THE sum of what we have discovered concerning the impressions we have of contingency in events, and liberty in actions, is this. Comparing together the moral and the material world; every thing is as much the result of established laws in the one as in the other. There is nothing in the whole universe that can properly be called contingent, that may be, or may not be; nothing loose and fluctuating in any part of nature; but every motion in the material, and every determination and action in the moral world, are directed by immutable laws; so that, whilst these laws remain in their force, not the smallest link of the universal chain of causes and effects can be broken, nor any one thing be otherwise than it is\*.

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\* As to an objection, of making God the author of sin, which may seem to arise from our system, it is rather popular than philosophical. Sin, or moral turpitude, lies in the evil intention of him who commits it. It consists in some wrong or depraved affection

THE doctrine of universal necessity being thus laid open, and proved to be the true system of nature, we proceed to a most important speculation; which is, to consider how far it is consistent with our moral sentiments, and in particular with those of praise, blame, merit, demerit, guilt, &c. While we continue uncertain as to this point, we cannot have any just or accurate notion of morals. The doctrine of liberty and necessity is, in this view, worthy of great attention; and in this view chiefly was it undertaken. To find our actions governed by a law repugnant to the foregoing moral sentiments, which are natural and universal, would, in the human constitution, be a puzzling circumstance. It would argue a defect or inconsistency, not uncommon in works of art, but rare, if at all to be found, in any work of nature. And yet we have occasion to be alarmed, when we hear

fiction supposed to be in the sinner. Now, the intention of the Deity is unerringly good. The end proposed by him is order and general happiness: and there is the greatest reason to believe, that all events are so directed by him, as to work towards this end. In the present system of things, some moral disorders are indeed included. No doubt, it is a considerable difficulty, how evil comes to be in the world, seeing God is perfectly good. But this difficulty is not peculiar to our doctrine; but recurs upon us at last with equal force, whatever hypothesis we embrace. For moral evil cannot exist, without being, at least, permitted by the Deity. And with regard to a first cause, PERMITTING is the same thing with CAUSING; since against his will nothing can possibly happen. All the schemes that have been contrived for answering this objection, are but the tortoise introduced to support the elephant. They put the difficulty a step further off, but never remove it.

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the advocates for liberty of indifference reason in the following manner. " If action (say they) " be necessary, and if we know it to be so, " what ground can there be for reprehension and " blame, for self-condemnation and remorse ? " If a clock were sensible of its own motions, " knowing that they proceed according to ne- " cessary laws, could it find fault with itself for " striking wrong ? Would it not rather blame " the artist, who had ill adjusted the wheels on " which its movements depend ? They urge " accordingly, that, upon the system of necessity, " the moral constitution of our nature is totally " overturned. There is an end to all the opera- " tions of conscience about right and wrong. " Man is no longer a moral agent, nor the sub- " ject of praise or blame for what he does." Supposing our actions to be subjected to the law of necessity, this is a strong attack upon human nature ; and better a thousand times give up this system we have been contending for, than acknowledge that man is incapable of morality. But let us not be rash in relinquishing a system that appears to be so well supported. Upon a narrower inspection, it may possibly be discovered, that the moral sense is concordant with necessity, and that the connection betwixt desire and will is no obstacle to approbation and disapprobation, praise and blame. To have a just conception of this matter, we must examine carefully by what particular circumstances these

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moral sentiments are occasioned. In this view, I observe, in the first place, that an action is always approved when it proceeds from a virtuous motive, and consequently hath a good aim or tendency. The connection betwixt the motive and the action, so far from diminishing, is the very circumstance that constitutes the morality of the action. The greater the influence of the motive, the greater the virtue of the actor, and the stronger our approbation. Do we not even praise one for modesty or sweetness of temper? The Deity is an object of the highest praise, for this very reason that he is necessarily good. . On the other hand, an action is disapproved, when it proceeds from a vicious motive; and the more influence the motive had on the agent, the greater his vice, and the stronger our disapprobation. We are obviously so constituted, as to blame ourselves, even when we have the clearest conviction of inability to behave better. A coward is conscious that he has no heart to encounter danger, and that he will certainly turn his back upon the approach of an enemy. Though he knows that he cannot help this weakness, yet he accuses and blames himself. He cannot help censuring himself in this manner, more than he can help his weakness, or more than he can help being ashamed of it. Upon the same foundation are evidently built our notions of rewards and punishments. If virtue ought to be rewarded, that man hath the best claim,

claim, who is virtuous by the constitution of his nature, and upon whom a vicious motive never hath the smallest influence. On the other hand, no man is more guilty, or more deserving of punishment, than he who, by his nature, hath the strongest propensity to vice, and upon whom virtuous motives have little or no effect.

BUT, in the foregoing instances, it will be urged, that the man we praise or blame had it in his power to act a different part; that we praise him for a benevolent action, or blame him for one that is fordid, because such action was his choice when he could have abstained from it. I admit, that in all our moral sentiments a power is supposed such as is here described. But when we attentively examine the nature of this power, we find it to be a physical power only, *viz.* a power to act according to our will, not a power to act against it. A man, in doing what is worthy of praise or blame, must be free from external coercion, and at liberty to follow his own choice. This power or freedom, which is perfectly consistent with moral or voluntary necessity, is evidently the only power which morality requires. Supposing only a man is free to act as he pleases, we currently praise or blame him for the part he acts, without requiring any other condition. We demand not that he should have a power to act in contradiction to his own desire and choice. The idea of such power enters not  
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into any of our moral sentiments : on the contrary, if the nature of any individual be either so good or so bad, as that he could not avoid being determined to the choice he made, he on that very account is the more praised or blamed.

I ENFORCE this doctrine, by considering the operation of conscience with respect to guilt. I have done a bad action which fills me with remorse. The first sentiment that arises, is, that I *ought* to have done otherways, or that it was my *duty* to have done otherways ; which in effect is blaming myself, or my nature, for not being sufficiently influenced by duty. Another sentiment also arises, that I *might* or *could* have done otherways. After the strictest analysis of this sentiment, it will be found to relate to physical power merely. “ I was compelled by no force ; I could have acted a different part had I been so inclined ; and this unhappy action was my own choice and voluntary deed.”

WE then find, that the moral sentiments have their full swing, without supposing liberty of indifference, or any thing like a power to act against our own will. Nor can I even conceive, that such power, supposing it real, could add any spring or force to the moral sense. When a man commits a crime, let us suppose, for a moment, he could have resisted the prevailing motive ;

tive ; the question upon this occurs, Why did he not resist ? why did he yield to the vicious motive, and bring upon himself shame and misery ? The answer must be, for no other can be given, That his disposition was bad, that he is a wretch, a miscreant, and deserves to be detested and abhorred. Here we clearly see, upon the present supposition, as well as upon that of necessity, that praise and blame rest ultimately upon the disposition or frame of mind ; that a virtuous disposition is the only object of praise, and a vicious disposition the only object of blame. It is therefore a fond conceit, to espouse the chimerical system of liberty of indifference, as necessary to explain our moral sentiments. These sentiments are perfectly concordant with the system of voluntary necessity ; and supposing liberty of indifference, we cannot even conceive how it should make man a more proper subject of moral sentiments, than in fact he is, considered as a necessary being.

I PROCEED one step farther ; which is, to make out, that liberty of indifference, so far from being implied in the moral sentiments of praise and blame, would in some measure cramp the moral sense, and blunt the sentiments arising from it. In order to put this matter in its true light, I must state a case. A man tempted to betray his trust, deliberates, wavers, but at last rejects the offered bribe, and adheres to his duty.

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Another man, without the least deliberation, rejects with disdain the bribe, and considers the offer as a high injury. Which of these persons is the most virtuous, and which of them merits the greatest praise, no one is at a loss to say. This familiar example is given to illustrate the influence that liberty of indifference must have on our moral sentiments. A power of resisting the strongest motives, must imply a wavering and fluctuation of the mind, betwixt the motives, and the power of resistance; for, by the supposition, the mind has both to chuse on. If so, a man endued with liberty of indifference is justly represented by the person first described, fluctuating and wavering betwixt a virtuous and vicious motive; and upon that account the actions of a man endued with liberty of indifference, will, in the estimation of all mankind, be less praise or blame worthy, than the actions of a man who is unerringly directed by the strongest motive without wavering or fluctuating. And indeed, after all, it would sound extremely harsh, that a good or an evil tendency, so slight as to leave power in the mind to resist it, should be an object of greater praise or blame, than a tendency so strong as to leave no power of resistance. Viewing the matter in this light, it evidently appears, that a power to act against motives, so far from being necessary to found praise or blame, would, if it really did exist, detract considerably from both.

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HAVING shown that our moral sentiments are perfectly concordant with moral necessity, I urge, in the next place, that no other system of action, allowing the utmost liberty of supposition, can lay a better foundation for praise or blame, or any moral sentiment, than the system of voluntary necessity doth. It is, I hope, made evident, that liberty of indifference, or a power to act against motives, lays not so good a foundation; and in place of it, I cannot imagine another system that will better answer the purpose. In judging of moral sentiments, an error is extremely apt to creep in. We have a clear conception, that a man under coercion or external force, can neither be praised nor blamed for what he doth. He had not power to do otherwise, and therefore he is innocent. This reflection we unwarily apply to moral necessity, not advertng to the substantial difference betwixt a voluntary and involuntary action. A man in his own conscience is made accountable for every voluntary action. It is not regarded, whether he had or had not a power of resistance; and we have shown, that this circumstance ought not to be regarded. And indeed, as observed above, a power of resistance, were it the system of nature, so far from contributing to praise or blame, would have no other effect but to lessen both.

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of indifference, ariseth, I am sensible, from a laudable cause. It is conceived to be more consistent with our sentiments of morality, than the system of necessity is. This opinion, when examined, is found to be erroneous. A man who is necessarily good or bad by the constitution of his nature, deserves more to be praised or blamed than he would be, supposing him to have a power of resisting all motives, and acting against them. And indeed, as every action doth in effect proceed from an internal cause, *viz.* a virtuous or vitious temper, praise or blame must ultimately rest upon this cause, and not upon the external action, or the power of acting. This consideration ought to make us chearfully abandon a system which is chimerical, and which at the same time is less concordant with the moral sense, than the true system of necessity is.

AND this leads me to inquire, whence the delusive notion of liberty of indifference? for surely it could not be generally espoused without some foundation. We have had occasion to observe, that we have no intuitive perception or direct consciousness of our being necessary agents; and that this branch of our nature is hid from the generality of mankind. The knowledge of it, not being necessary for our well-being, is left to be gathered by reasoning and reflection. We are however intuitively conscious of freedom of action, and of a power existing  
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In us to act according to our will and choice. This power is far from being the same with that of willing and chusing in an arbitrary manner; and yet, in superficial thinking, we are apt to confound these two powers, and to consider them as the same. Power indeed is with mankind a favourite idea, and we are prone to adopt any system which seems to extend it. The operations of the will, besides, are subtle and delicate; and, with the bulk of mankind, a power to chuse, and a power to act according to that choice, though essentially distinct, pass readily the one for the other.

HAVING discovered, that the moral sense is perfectly concordant with moral or voluntary necessity; as also, that we have no such thing naturally as a sense of power to act in contradiction to our inclination and choice; I proceed to a more particular examination of the sense of contingency, in the view chiefly to discover, if possible, whether it have any deeper root in our nature, than the erroneous conviction of liberty of indifference. In our ordinary train of thinking, it is certain, that all events appear not to us as necessary. A multitude of events seem to be under our power to cause or to prevent; and we readily make a distinction betwixt events that are necessary, *i. e.* that must be, and events that are contingent, *i. e.* that may be or may not be. This distinction is void of truth; for all things



that fall out either in the material or moral world, are, as we have seen, alike necessary, and alike the result of fixed laws. Yet whatever conviction a philosopher may have of this, the distinction betwixt things necessary, and things contingent, possesses his common train of thought, as much as it possesses the most illiterate. We act universally upon this distinction: nay, it is in truth the cause of all the labour, care, and industry of mankind. I illustrate this doctrine by an example. Constant experience hath taught us, that death is a necessary event. The human frame is not made to last for ever in its present condition; and no man thinks of more than a temporary existence upon this globe. But the particular time of our death appears a contingent event. However certain it be, that the time and manner of the death of each individual is determined by a train of preceding causes, and is not less fixed than the hour of the sun's rising or setting; yet no person is affected by this doctrine. In the care of prolonging life, we are directed by the supposed contingency of the time of death; which, to a certain term of years, we consider as depending in a great measure on ourselves, by caution against accidents, due use of food, exercise, &c. These means are prosecuted with the same diligence, as if there were in fact no necessary train of causes to fix the period of life. In short, whoever attends to his own practical ideas; whoever reflects upon the meaning

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meaning of the following words, which occur in all languages, of things *possible, contingent, that are in our power to cause or prevent*; whoever, I say, reflects upon these words, will clearly see, that they suggest certain perceptions or notions, repugnant to the doctrine above established, of universal necessity\*.

So stands the fact, and the question is, Whence proceeds this delusive sense of contingency? Is it original, or can it otherwise be accounted for? Reflecting upon this subject, I find that uniform events are understood to be ne-

\* This repugnancy of perception to truth, gave rise to the famous dispute concerning things possible, among the ancient Stoics, who held this doctrine of universal necessity. Diodorus, as Cicero informs us in his book *de fato*, cap. 7. held this opinion, *Id solum fieri posse, quod aut verum sit, aut futurum sit verum; at quicquid futurum sit, id dicit fieri necesse esse, et quicquid non sit futurum, id negat fieri posse*: that is, He maintained, there is nothing contingent in future events, nothing possible to happen, but that precise event which will happen. This, no doubt, was carrying their system its due length: though, in this way of speaking, there is something that manifestly shocks the natural perceptions of mankind. Chrysippus, on the other hand, sensible of its harshness, maintained, that it is possible for future events to happen otherways than in fact they happen. In this he was certainly inconsistent with his general system of necessity; and therefore, as Cicero gives us to understand, was often embarrassed in the dispute with Diodorus: and Plutarch, in his book *de repugnantibus Stoicorum*, exposes him for this inconsistency. But Chrysippus chose to follow his natural perceptions, in opposition to philosophy; holding by this, that Diodorus's doctrine of nothing being possible but what happens, is *ignava ratio*, tending to absolute inaction; *cui si preeamus*, as Cicero expresses it, *nihil omnino agamus in vita*. So early were philosophers sensible of the difficulty of reconciling speculation with perception, as to this doctrine of fate.

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ecessary, such as day and night, winter and summer, death, &c. ; but events in which there are any degrees of variety, such as the time of death, good or bad weather, &c. are generally understood to be contingent. Does our sense of contingency arise from the uncertainty of the event? Hardly so; for uncertainty cannot naturally have any other effect upon the mind, than to produce a consciousness of our ignorance. The sense of contingency, then, with respect to things uncertain, must be pronounced an original law in our nature. By this law we are made to conceive many future events as in themselves uncertain, and as having no determined cause of existence. Contingency in this view may justly be considered as a secondary quality, which hath no real existence in things; but, like other secondary qualities, is made to appear as an attribute of events, in order to serve the purposes of human life.

THIS sense of contingency in events, which I now hold to be original, regards not only events in the material world, but also events which arise from moral causes, or the activity of man. The event of a pitched battle betwixt two armies equal in numbers and in discipline, every one deems to be in some measure contingent. When a man is apt to waver in his resolutions, the course he will steer is reckoned a matter of chance or contingency. But how can the sense  
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of contingency in this case be reconciled to the doctrine of our being necessary agents? We shall see anon an extreme beneficial final cause of the sense of contingency, with respect to actions as well as events; and to this end there appears a very wise contrivance of nature. A sense of necessity would, no doubt, be directly contradictory to the sense of contingency; and both could not subsist together. To make way therefore for the sense of contingency, the necessary connection betwixt desire and will is kept out of sight; and by this contrivance it is, that we are not sensible of being necessary agents. The discovery that we are so, proceeds from a long train of reasoning; and the conviction which arises from a process of reasoning, is too faint to counterbalance an intuitive perception or original sense of contingency.

THUS then we find in the moral world a case where truth contradicts the natural notions of mankind; where it presents to us, with irresistible evidence, the system of universal necessity, upon which we never regulate our conduct, but are so formed as to act upon notions quite opposite. What shall be done in this case? Must we sacrifice truth to sense? or must we adhere to truth, and force sense into a compliance? Neither. Truth is too rigid to bend to our perceptions; and these are too vigorous to be subdued by abstract reasoning. The attempt is vain,  
*pugnaxtia*

*pugnantia secum, frontibus adversis, componere.*  
 Let us be honest then: let us fairly own that truth is on the side of necessity; but that it was proper for man to be formed with such notions of contingency, as would fit him for the part he hath to act. This thought leads us to a final cause, which I shall now endeavour to explain.

THE Deity is the primary cause of all things. In his infinite mind he formed the great plan of government which is carried on by laws fixed and immutable. These laws produce a regular train of causes and effects in the moral as well as material world, bringing about those events which are comprehended in the original plan, and admitting the possibility of none other. This universe is a vast machine, winded up and set a-going. The several springs and wheels operate unerringly one upon another. The hand advanceth, and the clock strikes, precisely as the artist hath determined. Whoever hath just ideas, and a true taste of philosophy, will see this to be the real theory of the universe; and that, upon any other theory, there can be no general order, no whole, no plan, no means nor end in its administration. In this plan, man, a rational creature, bears his part, and fulfils certain ends for which he was designed. He must be an actor, and must act with consciousness and spontaneity. He exercises thought and reason, and his nature  
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is improved by the due use of these rational powers. Consequently, it is necessary, that he should have some sense of things possible and contingent, things depending upon himself to cause, that he may be led to a proper exercise of that activity for which he was designed. But as a sense of necessity would be a perpetual contradiction to the sense of contingency, it was well ordered, that his being a necessary agent should be hid from him. To have had his instinctive perceptions, his practical ideas, formed upon the plan of universal necessity; to have seen himself a part of that great machine, wound up, and set a-going, by the author of his nature, would have been inconsistent with the part that is allotted him to act. Then indeed the *ignava ratio*, the inactive doctrine of the Stoics, would have followed. Conceiving nothing to be contingent, or depending upon himself to cause, there would have been no room for forethought about futurity, nor for any sort of industry and care. He would have had no motives to action, but immediate sensations of pleasure and pain. He must have been formed like the brutes, who have no other principle of action but mere instinct. The few instincts he is at present endued with, would have been altogether insufficient. He must have had an instinct to sow, another to reap; he must have had instincts to pursue every conveniency, and perform every office of life. In short, reason and  
 thought

thought could not have been exercised in the way they are, that is, man could not have been man, had he not been furnished with a sense of contingency, and also been kept in ignorance of his being a necessary agent. In this, as in all things else, the divine wisdom and goodness are most admirable. As, in the material world, the Almighty hath formed our senses, not for the discovery of the intimate nature and essences of things, but for the uses and conveniencies of life; as he hath, in several instances, exhibited natural objects to us, not in their real, but in a sort of artificial view, clothed with such distinctions and productive of such sensations as are for the benefit of man; so he hath exhibited the intellectual world to us in a like artificial view, clothed with certain colours and distinctions, imaginary, but useful. Life is conducted according to this artificial view of things; and by our speculations is not in the least affected. Let the philosopher meditate in his closet upon abstract truth; let him be ever so much convinced of the settled necessary train of causes and effects, which leaves nothing, properly speaking, in his power; yet the moment he comes forth into the world he acts as a free agent\*.

And,

\* It appears from the poets, (see Pope's Iliad, book 6. l. 624.), that among the Greeks, an enlightened and inquisitive people, the doctrine of fate or destiny prevailed. Yet when one's evil destiny was foretold, even by the most celebrated oracle, this never had any other effect than redoubling the person's diligence

And, what is wonderful, though in this he acts upon a false supposition, yet he is not thereby misled from the ends of action, but, on the contrary, fulfils them to better advantage.

It will now be proper to answer some objections which may be urged against the doctrine we have advanced \*. One, which at first may seem of considerable weight, is, That it seems to represent

gence to avoid the impending evil. Such authority have natural impressions, in opposition to abstract reasoning, and even to the most sacred authority.

\* I acknowledge it to have been once my opinion, that we have a delusive sense of power to act against motives, or to act against our own inclination and choice, commonly termed *liberty of indifference*. I was carried along by the current of popular opinion; and I could not dream this sense to be a pure imagination, when I found it vouched by so many grave writers. I had at the same time a thorough conviction, from the clearest evidence, that man is a necessary agent; and therefore I justly concluded, that the sense of liberty of indifference, like that of contingency, must be delusive. I yielded to another popular opinion, That the perceptions of the moral sense, praise and blame, merit and demerit, guilt and remorse, are inconsistent with necessity, and must be founded upon the delusive sense of liberty of indifference. From these premises, I was obliged, though reluctantly, to admit, that some of the most noted perceptions and emotions of the moral sense are entirely built upon this delusive sense of liberty. The subject being handled after that manner in the first edition of this book, I was sensible of the odium of a doctrine that rests virtue in any measure upon a delusion; and I stated this as the first objection, in order to remove it the best way I could. Candor I shall always esteem essential in speaking to the public, not less than in private dealings; and my opinion of the wisdom of providence in the government of this world, is so firmly established, that I never can be apprehensive of harm in adhering to truth, however singular it may appear upon some occasions. I now cheerfully acknowledge my errors; and am happy in thinking, that I have at last got into the right track. It appears to me at

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represent the Deity as acting deceitfully by his creatures. He hath given them certain notions of contingency in events, by which he hath, in a manner, forced them to act upon a false hypothesis; as if he were unable to carry on the government of this world, did his creatures conceive things according to the real truth. This objection is, in a great measure, obviated, by what is observed in the introduction to this essay. It is universally allowed by modern philosophers, that the perceptions of our external senses do not always correspond to strict truth, but are so contrived, as rather to answer useful purposes. Now, if it be called a deceit in our senses, not to give us just representations of the material world, the Deity must be the author of this deceit, as much as he is of that which prevails in the moral world. But no just objection can lie against the conduct of the Deity, in either case. Our senses, both internal and external, are given us for different ends and purposes; some to discover truth, others to make us happy and virtuous. The senses which are appropria-

present a harsh doctrine, that virtue in any part should be founded on a delusion, though formerly the supposed truth of the doctrine reconciled me to it. It gives me solid satisfaction, to find the moral sense entirely consistent with voluntary necessity, which I must pronounce to be the system of nature. The moral sense makes a chief branch of the original constitution of man; and it can never lose its authority, while we have any feeling of pleasure and pain. According to this plan of morality, the objection, That it is partly founded on a delusion, vanisheth; and the objection, for that reason, is dropt in the present edition.

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ted to the discovery of truth, unerringly answer their end. So do the senses which are appropriated to virtue and happiness. And, in this view, the objection vanisheth, because it amounts but to this, that the same sense doth not answer both ends. As to the other branch of the objection, That it must imply imperfection in the Deity, if he cannot govern this world without deluding his creatures; I answer, That there is nothing in the foregoing doctrine which can justly argue imperfection in the Deity. For it is abundantly plain, first, that it is a more perfect state of things, and more worthy of the Deity, to have all events going on with unbroken order, in a fixed train of causes and effects, than to have every thing desultory and contingent. And if such a being as man was to be placed in this world, to act his present part, it was necessary, that he should have a notion of contingency in events, and of power to direct and control them. The objection therefore, on the whole, amounts to no more, than that the Deity cannot work contradictions. For if it was fit and wise, that man should think and act as an independent being, having power to regulate his own actions, and, by means of these, to regulate also future events; it was impossible this could be otherwise accomplished, than by enduing him with a sense of this power: and if it was also fit and wise, that universal necessity should be the real plan of the universe, this sense must be delusive.

And, after all, seeing our happiness, in many instances, is placed upon delusive perceptions, why should it puzzle us, that our activity is promoted by the same means? No one considers it as an imputation on the Deity, that we are so framed as to perceive what is not, *viz.* beauty, grandeur, colour, heat or cold, as existing in objects, when such perceptions, though delusive, contribute to our happiness: and yet our happiness depends greatly more on action than on any of these perceptions.

THE foregoing objection may perhaps be turned into a different shape. If it was necessary for man to be constituted with such an artificial sense, why was he endued with so much knowledge as to unravel the mystery? What purpose does it serve, to let in just so much light, as to discover the disguised appearance of the moral world, when it was intended that his conduct should be adjusted to this disguised appearance? To this I answer, first, That the discovery, when made, is not attended with any bad consequence; and next, that a good consequence, of very great importance, results from it. No bad consequence, I say, ensues from the discovery, that contingency, and power to regulate our own conduct, are delusive perceptions: for the case is confessedly parallel in the material world, where no harm hath ensued. After we have discovered, by philosophy, that several of the appearances

pearances of nature are only useful illusions; that secondary qualities exist not in matter; and that the perceptions of our external senses, in various instances, do not correspond to philosophic truth; after these discoveries are made, do they in the least affect even the philosopher himself, in ordinary action? Doth not he, in common with the rest of mankind, proceed, as it is fit he should, upon the common system of appearances and natural perceptions? As little, in the present case, do our speculations about liberty and necessity unhinge the plan of nature. Upon the common system we do and must act; and no discoveries made concerning the illusive nature of our perceptions, can disappoint in any degree the intention of the Deity.

BUT this is not all. These discoveries are also of excellent use; as they furnish us with one of the strongest arguments for the existence of the Deity, and as they set the wisdom and goodness of his providence in the most striking light. Nothing carries more express characters of design, nothing can be conceived more opposite to chance, than a plan so artfully contrived, for adjusting our impressions and feelings to the purposes of life. For here things are carried off, as it were, from the straight line; taken out of the course in which they would of themselves proceed; and so-moulded, as forcibly, and against their nature, to be subservient to

man. He doth not receive the impression of the moral world in the same manner as wax receives the impression of a seal ; he doth not reflect the image of it in the same manner as a mirror reflects its images. He hath a peculiar cast and turn given to his conceptions, admirably adjusted to the part allotted him to act. These conceptions are indeed illusive ; yet, which is wonderful, it is by this very circumstance, that, in man, two of the most opposite things in nature are happily reconciled, liberty and necessity ; having this illustrious effect, that in him are accumulated all the prerogatives both of a necessary and free agent. The discovery of such a marvellous adjustment, which is more directly opposed to chance than any other thing conceivable, must necessarily give us the strongest impression of a wise designing cause. And now a sufficient reason appears, for suffering man to make this surprising discovery. The Almighty hath admitted us so far into his counsels, as to afford the justest foundation for admiring and adoring his wisdom. It is a remark worthy to be made, that the capacities of man seem in general to have a tendency beyond the wants and occasions of his present state. This hath often been observed with respect to his wishes and desires. The same holds as to his intellectual faculties, which sometimes, as in the instance before us, run beyond the limits of what at present is necessary for him to know, and

and let in upon him some glimmerings of higher and nobler discoveries. A veil is thrown over nature, where it is not useful for him to behold it : and yet sometimes, by turning aside that veil a very little, he is admitted to a fuller view ; that his admiration of nature, and the God of nature, may be increased ; that his curiosity and love of truth may be fed ; and perhaps that some *augurium*, some intimation may be given, of his being designed for a future, more exalted state of being ; when attaining the full maturity of his nature, he shall no longer stand in need of artificial impressions, but shall perceive and act according to the strictest truth of things.

APPEN-

## A P P E N D I X.

*Containing the substance of a pamphlet writ  
in defence of the foregoing Essay.*

WITH respect to liberty and necessity, our author's doctrine may be comprised under the following heads. 1. That man is a rational being, endued with liberty. 2. That his liberty consists in acting voluntarily, or according to his inclination and choice. 3. That his will is necessarily, that is, infallibly and certainly, determined by motives; or, in the style of the schools, *voluntas necessario sequitur ultimum judicium intellectus practici*. 4. That, consequently, liberty of indifference, or an arbitrary power of acting, without or against motives, is no part of human nature. 5. That though human actions proceed in a fixed train, this is owing to no blind fate, but to the predestination or decree of God, who is the first cause of all things.

CONCERNING these points philosophers and divines may differ in opinion, and each side may, and will impute error to the other; but that, by any of the church of Scotland, such opinions should be censured as unsound or heterodox, shows great ignorance, when they are espoused  
by

by our first great reformers, and inculcated in all the most noted systems of theology, composed by Calvinist divines, and taught in our universities. With us it is a fundamental principle, That God from all eternity hath foreordained whatever comes to pass; that all events are immutably and necessarily fixed by the decree of God, and cannot happen in any other way than he hath predetermined. But the most orthodox divines agree with our author, not only in his doctrine of necessity, as founded on the decree of God; but likewise in his account of that rational or moral necessity, which is effectuated by the operation of motives on the will. They hold, with him, that liberty is opposed, not to necessity, but to constraint; that it consists, not in indifference, but in spontaneity, or *lubentia rationalis*; and that the will necessarily follows the last judgment of the understanding. They shew, that none of the consequences follow, which are endeavoured to be laid upon our author; but that virtue and vice, rewards and punishments, are consistent with a necessity of this sort. Thus, for instance, the great Calvin reasons in the following manner. “ Seeing we have often mentioned the distinction betwixt *necessity* and *constraint*, upon which this whole controversy turns, we must now explain it a little more accurately. They who defend free will, in opposition to divine grace, maintain, that there can be neither virtue nor vice where there is  
 “ necessity.



“ necessity. We answer, That God is necessa-  
 “ rily good; and that his goodness, though ne-  
 “ cessary, is not upon that account the less wor-  
 “ thy of praise. Again, that the devil is neces-  
 “ sarily wicked; and yet his wickedness is not  
 “ the less criminal. Nor is this any invention  
 “ of ours; for in the same manner St Augustine  
 “ and St Bernard reason.—Our adversaries in-  
 “ sist, That what is *voluntary*, cannot at the  
 “ same time be *necessary*. We shew them, that  
 “ both these qualities are found in the goodness  
 “ of God. They pretend it to be absurd, that  
 “ men should be blamed for actions they must  
 “ unavoidably perform. By the instance above  
 “ given, we show, that there is in this no absur-  
 “ dity.—They object again, That unless virtue  
 “ and vice proceed from a free choice, accor-  
 “ ding to their sense of freedom, there can be  
 “ no reason either for inflicting punishments, or  
 “ bestowing rewards. As to punishments, I an-  
 “ swer, That they are justly inflicted on those  
 “ who commit evil; because it makes no dif-  
 “ ference, whether their choice was free, *i. e.*  
 “ arbitrary, or whether they were under the in-  
 “ fluence of bad motives; provided only they  
 “ were *voluntary* in their guilt.—As to re-  
 “ wards, there is certainly no absurdity in our  
 “ saying, that these are bestowed rather accor-  
 “ ding to the goodness of God, than the merit  
 “ of men.” *Calvin. tractat. theolog. p. 152.*  
*edit. Amstelod. 1667.*

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THE learned Francis Turretine, Professor in Geneva, whose authority as an orthodox divine will be allowed to be of the greatest weight, examines this question fully in his *Institut. theolog.* under the head *de libero arbitrio, vol. 1. p. 728. to 737.* and maintains the same doctrine with our author. He represents it as the capital and fundamental heresy of the Pelagians and Arminians, that they hold liberty to consist in indifference, not in spontaneity; and that they maintain every kind of necessity to be inconsistent with liberty. With great accuracy and strength of reason, he considers the several kinds of necessity. He shews, that two of them, coercion, and physical necessity arising from the laws of matter, are destructive of liberty. But that rational or moral necessity, which arises from the constitution of the mind as necessarily determined by motives, and the necessity which arises from the divine decree, are perfectly consistent with liberty in its orthodox sense. He removes the objection against this doctrine, of its making man a mere machine; and, much in the same manner with our author, shows, that upon the Arminian liberty of indifference, or an arbitrary power of counteracting all motives, man would be a most irrational and unaccountable being, to whom argument and reasoning, precept and command, would be addressed in vain. The following are his words, (*p. 566. vol. 1.*), “ There are  
 “ only two kinds of necessity which are incon-  
 “ sistent

“ sistent with liberty; physical necessity, and the  
 “ necessity of constraint. The other kinds of  
 “ necessity, which arise either from the decree  
 “ or influence of God, or from the object itself,  
 “ and the last judgment of the understanding,  
 “ are so far from overthrowing liberty, that they  
 “ rather establish it; because they do not con-  
 “ strain the will, but persuade it; and produce  
 “ a voluntary choice in one that was before un-  
 “ willing. For whatever a man does according  
 “ to his inclination, with judgment and under-  
 “ standing, and with the full consent of his will,  
 “ it is impossible but he must do freely, al-  
 “ though, in another sense, he does it necessari-  
 “ ly. This holds, from whatever quarter we  
 “ suppose the necessity laid upon him to arise;  
 “ whether it be from the existence of the thing  
 “ itself, or from the motive effectually determi-  
 “ ning his will, or from the decree and con-  
 “ course of the first cause.”

BENEDICT PICTET, Turretine's successor in  
 the chair of Geneva, and acknowledged in the  
 universities of this country as an author of the  
 soundest principles, establishes the same doctrine  
 in so clear a manner, as that words cannot be  
 more precise and express. “ Before we discourse  
 “ of free will, we must explain the meaning of  
 “ the term. By free will we understand no-  
 “ thing else, but a power of doing what we  
 “ please, with judgment and understanding,  
 “ without

“ without any external compulsion. To this  
 “ free will two things are opposed. First, phy-  
 “ sical or natural necessity; such as we see in  
 “ inanimate beings; for instance, the necessity  
 “ by which fire burns. Next, the necessity of  
 “ constraint; which arises from external vio-  
 “ lence, imposed against the inclination of him  
 “ who suffers it; as when a man is hurried to  
 “ prison, or to an idol-temple. But we must  
 “ not oppose to free will that necessity of de-  
 “ pendence on God which all creatures lie un-  
 “ der, and from which no rational being can be  
 “ exempted; nor that rational necessity which  
 “ arises from the last judgment of the under-  
 “ standing; as when I necessarily chuse that  
 “ which appears to me best; for my choice,  
 “ though necessary, is notwithstanding free.  
 “ Wherefore, all that is requisite to freedom is,  
 “ that one should act spontaneously, and with  
 “ understanding: which clearly follows from  
 “ this, that God is the freest of all beings, and  
 “ yet he is necessarily determined to good. The  
 “ same holds of saints and angels. Liberty there-  
 “ fore does not consist in indifference: for if so,  
 “ God would not be a free being; and the more  
 “ man was determined to good, or the more  
 “ perfect he was, the less liberty he would en-  
 “ joy; which is absurd. This is further con-  
 “ firmed by the following reasoning. We all  
 “ chuse what appears to us our chief good or  
 “ happiness with entire liberty: for who is not  
 P “ hearty

“ hearty and voluntary in such choice? Yet to  
 “ this choice we are determined by a strong and  
 “ irresistible necessity: for no man has any free-  
 “ dom of indifference in this case. No man  
 “ can wish himself miserable, or can chuse evil  
 “ as such. Liberty therefore by no means con-  
 “ sists in indifference.” *Theolog. Christ. l. 4.*  
*cap. 6. § 4.*

OF the modern Calvinist writers who agree with our author, we shall give one example, *viz.* the Reverend Mr Jonathan Edwards minister of Stockbridge in New England, in his late treatise, intituled, *A careful and strict inquiry into the modern prevailing notions of that freedom of will which is supposed to be essential to moral agency, virtue and vice, reward and punishment, praise and blame.* Published at Boston 1754. The piety and orthodoxy of this author, it is presumed, none but Arminians will adventure to call in question. Nothing can be better calculated than this book to answer all the objections against our author's doctrine of moral necessity, to shew its consistency with reason and scripture, and the injustice of ascribing to it any bad tendency. To quote particular passages is unnecessary; for the whole book, from beginning to end, is one continued chain of argumentation in favour of this doctrine. He every where holds and maintains, “ That the will is in every case  
 “ necessarily determined by the strongest mo-  
 “ tives,

“ tives, and that this moral necessity (*p.* 24.)  
 “ may be as absolute as natural necessity ; that  
 “ is, that a moral effect may be as perfectly  
 “ connected with its moral cause, as a naturally  
 “ necessary effect is with its natural cause.”  
 For, says he, (*p.* 22.), “ The difference be-  
 “ tween these two does not lie so much in the  
 “ nature of the connection, as in the two terms  
 “ connected.” He rejects the notion of liber-  
 ty, as implying any *self-determining* power in  
 the will, any *indifference* or *contingency*, *p.* 29. ;  
 and shews in several chapters, *p.* 135.—192.  
 that those notions of liberty which the Armi-  
 nians hold, are so far from being necessary to ac-  
 countableness, to virtue or vice, to praise or  
 blame, that, on the contrary, they are incon-  
 sistent with virtue, which must always suppose  
 the determining power of motives.

HE examines the passages of scripture which  
 relate to this doctrine. He shews, that the acts  
 of the will of the human soul of Christ were *ne-  
 cessarily holy*, yet virtuous, praise-worthy, and  
 rewardable. He answers the objection to this  
 doctrine, of its making God the author of sin,  
 exactly in the same way with our author, by  
 distinguishing between the intention of God  
 and the intention of the sinner. Though no  
 man, who either knows the character of this au-  
 thor, or peruses his book, can entertain the least  
 doubt of his zeal for religion ; yet it appears,

that in New England, as well as elsewhere, the worst persons are liable to be calumniated and traduced. For Mr Edwards, when concluding his book, observes, (*p.* 285.), “ It is not  
 “ unlikely that some who value themselves on  
 “ the supposed rational principles of modern  
 “ fashionable divinity, will have their indigna-  
 “ tion raised at the subject of this discourse, and  
 “ will renew the usual exclamations about the  
 “ *fate of the Heathens*, Hobbes’s necessity,  
 “ and making men mere machines; accumu-  
 “ lating the terrible epithets of *fatal*, *inevitable*,  
 “ *irresistible*, and it may be with the addition of  
 “ *horrid* and *blasphemous*; and perhaps much  
 “ skill may be used to set the things which have  
 “ been said in colours which shall be shocking to  
 “ the imagination, and moving to the passions of  
 “ those who have either too little capacity, or  
 “ too much confidence of the opinions they have  
 “ imbibed, and contempt of the contrary, to  
 “ try the matter by any serious and circumspect  
 “ examination; or some particular things may  
 “ be picked out, which they think will sound  
 “ harshest in the ears of the generality; and  
 “ these may be glossed and descanted on with  
 “ tart and contemptuous words, and from  
 “ thence the whole treated with triumph and  
 “ insult.” How unbecoming and indecent such  
 methods are, and how unlike the conduct of a  
 fair and impartial inquirer after truth, the Re-  
 verend author fully shews; nor can I enter-  
 tain

tain any doubt that my readers will join with him in condemning such a spirit.

To relieve myself a little from the languid uniformity of a continued defence, I will upon this single occasion change hands, and try my fortune in making an attack. Let us approach a little nearer to this liberty of indifference, which in late times has become so mighty a favourite, even with some who would be thought Calvinists, and let us examine whether it will stand a narrow inspection. I am not without hopes, that upon a cool survey it will be found a favourite not worthy to be contended for. Liberty of indifference in chusing betwixt two things of equal importance, is abundantly palatable, and may pass without objection. But liberty of indifference is not confined to cases of this nature. It is asserted of man, that he has a power to will and act, without having any reason or motive whatever to influence his will. A thing still more extraordinary is asserted with equal assurance, that man has a power to will and act, not only without motives, but in direct contradiction to the strongest motives that can influence the mind. It might well be urged, that this doctrine is a bold attack upon the common sense of mankind; and not the less bold that it is taken for granted, without the least evidence, or so much as a single experiment to support it. Such a being there may possibly be as



is described; but every man who has not a cause to defend, will bear witness that this is not his case. I venture to affirm, that when the proper questions are put to any plain man who is ignorant of the controversy, his answers to every one of them will be repugnant to liberty of indifference as above explained. But waving this consideration at present, my attack shall be made from a different quarter, by examining the consequences of such a power, supposing it, for argument's sake, to be inherent in man. In the essay upon liberty and necessity, it is inculcated at full length, that man endued with this power would be an absurd and unaccountable being. He could not be relied on. Oaths and engagements would be but brittle ties, and therefore he would be quite unqualified for the social life. I add, that this power, which is imagined to exist in man in order to bestow on him the greater self-command, has in reality the contrary effect. At the instant perhaps of willing or acting, man, upon this supposition, must have a sway over himself, altogether arbitrary: but then he has no antecedent authority. He himself, even when the instant of execution approaches, cannot say what will be his determination, how he will chuse, or how he will act. It is evident from the very nature of the thing, that even the Deity can have no foresight here, when, by the supposition, the man's will is altogether arbitrary,

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and is quite independent of all connections internal or external.

I MAKE a second attack, different from the former. I consider man as acting in the great theatre of the world, in which all things are governed by the providence of an almighty Being, As it appears to me, the directing influence of providence is altogether excluded from human actions, by this supposed liberty of indifference. The operations of matter are governed by steady laws, and thereby contribute unerringly to the great designs of providence. But to what rule can the actions of men be subjected, which are supposed to be altogether arbitrary, and under no manner of control? They cannot be under the direction of the Deity; for that supposition effectually annihilates the liberty of indifference. The influence of the Deity must be superior to all other motives in determining the will; and consequently must have the effect to make man a necessary agent in the sense of moral necessity. Man then, by this supposed power, is withdrawn from under the government of providence, and left at large to the most bizarre and most absurd course of action, independent of motives from good or evil, independent of reason, and independent of every view, purpose, or end. Here is chance clearly introduced in its most ugly form, so far as human actions can have an influence. This displays a dismal scene, sufficient  
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to raise horror in every one who has feeling. After this, let not the Arminians cry out against blind fatality : A very uncomfortable doctrine to be sure. But is blind fatality worse than blind chance ? Could I possibly be convinced of either, I should dread falling into despair, and being led to deny the being of a God.

BUT enough of this dismal scene. I proceed to follow out a thought occasionally thrown out above, *viz.* that liberty of indifference is an imaginary scheme, unsupported by any facts in human nature, and which no man was ever conscious of. This leads me to say and believe, that it never was embraced seriously in its true import by any man ; not even by the most zealous Arminian. Those who espouse this doctrine, do certainly take up with words, neglecting to examine things as they truly are : for what man of plain sense ever imagined, that he can incline, that he can chuse, that he can resolve and will, without being prompted by any consideration, good or bad, and without having any end or purpose in view ? When a man acts, it is expected that he can say, what moves him. If he can give no account, every one considers him as a changeling or madman. As a consequence from this, I venture further to say, that the doctrine of moral necessity is that which is universally embraced by men of plain sense, whose minds are not warped by the tenets of a sect.

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This doctrine, I say, is universally embraced; though not carried its utmost length, nor seen in its full extent, except, perhaps, by the studious and contemplative. With regard to acting, every man indeed conceives himself to be free; because he is conscious that he acts voluntarily, and according to his own choice. He is however at the same time conscious, that he has not the power of chusing or willing arbitrarily or indifferently. As to his inclinations, wishes, and desires, he is sensible that these are not under his arbitrary power. And if this be once admitted, the chain of moral necessity is established. For no plain man, at the time of the action, entertains the least doubt, that his will is influenced by inclinations, wishes, and desires; which puts a final end to the liberty of indifference.

IN the foregoing light to me appears unavoidably the celebrated doctrine of liberty of indifference: and when such is my case, I can as little avoid, after the coolest reflection, thinking that the author of the essays has done well in contributing his endeavour to banish the Arminian doctrine out of our church. It is my serious opinion, that to embrace it with all its necessary consequences, is in effect introducing into this world, blind chance, confusion, and anarchy; which are the high road to Atheism. Far be it from my thoughts, at the same time,

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to accuse Arminians of Atheism, or of irreligion in any degree. I am sensible, that the Arminian doctrine has been and is espoused by many good and pious men. But this I must take the liberty to affirm, that these men stop short at the threshold, without pushing their way forward to behold the ugly appearances within doors. These appearances are now laid open to them. If the doctrine can be moulded into some new shape, to make it square with religion and morality, such improvement must be agreeable to every well-disposed mind, because of the comfort it will afford to those who adhere to liberty of indifference. But, without pretending to the gift of prophecy, I venture to foretel, that it will be extremely difficult to stop any where short of moral necessity; and that any solid reformation of the Arminian doctrine, must infallibly lead to the principles of Calvin, and of our other reformers.

## ESSAYS

E S S A Y S  
ON THE  
P R I N C I P L E S  
OF  
M O R A L I T Y  
AND  
N A T U R A L R E L I G I O N.

P A R T II.



# E S S A Y I.

## Of BELIEF.

**B**ELIEF is a term so familiar, as to have escaped the inquiry of all philosophers, except the author of the treatise of human nature. And yet the subject is by no means rendered so plain by that author, as not still to admit doubts and difficulties. He hath made two propositions sufficiently evident: 1. That belief is not any separate action or perception of the mind, but only a certain manner of conceiving propositions. 2. That it does not accompany every one of our conceptions. A man, in some circumstances, sees objects double; but he doth not believe them to be double. He can form the idea of a golden mountain; he can form the idea of it, as of a certain size, and as existing in a certain place: but he doth not believe it to be existing.

HAVING proved that belief is not a separate perception, but only a certain manner of conception, our author goes on to explain what he means by this certain manner of conception. And his doctrine is, That belief making no alteration upon the idea, as to its parts and composition, must consist in the lively manner of conceiving

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ceiving the idea; and that, in reality, a lively idea and belief are the same. Whatever opinion I may have of this author's acuteness and penetration, neither his nor any man's authority shall prevail with me to embrace such a doctrine. For, at this rate, credulity and a lively imagination would be always connected; which doth not hold in fact. Poetry and painting produce lively ideas, but they seldom produce belief. For my part, I have no difficulty to form as lively a conception of Cæsar's dying in his bed, despatching upon the vanity of ambition, or dictating rules of government to his successor, as of his being put to death in the senate-house. Nothing is told with more vivacity, than the death of Cyrus, in a pitched battle with the Queen of the Scythians; who dipped his head, as we are told, in a vessel full of blood; saying, "Satiatè thyself with blood, of which thou wast ever thirsty." Yet, upon comparing circumstances and authors, the more probable opinion is, that Cyrus died in his bed.

IT may be observed, at the same time, that the conclusion is very lame which this author draws from his premises. Belief makes no alteration upon the idea, as to its parts and composition. It can only therefore consist in a modification of the idea. But does it follow, that it consists in a lively conception of the idea, which  
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is but one of many modifications? There is not here the shadow of an inference.

OUR author indeed urges, that true history takes fast hold of the mind, and presents its objects in a more lively manner than any fabulous narration can do. Every man must judge for himself. I cannot admit this to be my case. History, no doubt, takes faster hold of the mind, than any fiction told in the plain historical style. But can any man doubt, who has not an hypothesis to defend, that poetry makes a stronger impression than history? Let a man, if he hath any feeling, attend the celebrated Garrick in the character of Richard, or in that of King Lear; and he will find, that dramatic representations make strong and lively impressions, which history seldom comes up to.

BUT now, if it shall be supposed, that history presents its objects in a more lively manner than can be done by dramatic or epic poetry; it will not therefore follow, that a lively idea is the same with belief. I read a passage in Virgil: let it be the episode of Nisus and Euryalus. I read a passage in Livy, *sciz.* the sacking of Rome by the Gauls. If I have a more lively idea of the latter story, I put it to my author, to point out the cause of this effect. He surely will not affirm, that it is the force of expression, or harmony of numbers: for, in these particulars, the

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historian

historian cannot be compared to the poet. It is evident, that no other satisfactory account of the matter can be given, but this, that Livy's superior influence upon the imagination, is the effect of his being considered as a true historian. The most then that our author can make of his observation, supposing it to hold true in fact, is, that the authority of the historian produceth belief, and that belief produceth a more lively idea than any fabulous narration can do. The truth of the matter is, that belief, and a lively conception, are really two distinct modifications of the idea; which, though often conjoined, are not only separable in the imagination, but in fact are often separated. Truth indeed bestows a certain degree of vivacity upon our ideas. At the same time, I cannot admit, that history exceeds dramatic or epic poetry, in conveying a lively conception of facts; because it appears evident, that, in works of imagination, the want of truth is more than compensated by sentiment and language.

SOMETIMES, indeed, belief is the result of a lively impression. A dramatic representation is one instance, when it affects us so much as to draw off the attention from every other object, and even from ourselves. In this condition, we do not consider the actor, but conceive him to be the very man whose character he assumes. We have that very man before our eyes. We perceive

ceive him as existing and acting, and believe him to be existing and acting. This belief, however, is but momentary. It vanisheth like a dream, so soon as we are roused by any trivial circumstance, to a consciousness of ourselves, and of the place we are in. Nor is the lively impression, even in this case, the cause of belief, but only the occasion of it, by diverting the attention of the mind from itself and its situation. It is in some such manner, that the idea of a spectre in the dark, which fills the mind, and diverts it from itself, is, by the force of imagination, converted into a reality. We think we see and hear it : we are convinced of it, and believe the matter to be so.

REJECTING therefore this author's opinion, the real truth appears to be this. There is a certain peculiar manner of perceiving objects, and conceiving propositions, which being altogether simple, cannot be described, but is expressed by the word *belief*. The causes of this modification, termed belief, are the authority of my own senses, and the authority of others, who either relate facts upon the authority of their senses, or what they have heard at second or third hand. So that belief, mediately or immediately, is founded upon the authority of our senses. We are so constituted by nature, as to put trust in our senses. Nor, in general, is it in our power to disbelieve our senses ; they have

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authority

authority with us irresistible. There is but one exception that I can think of. Finding, by experience, that we have been sometimes led into an error, by trusting some particular perceptions, the remembrance of these instances counterbalances the authority of our perception in the like cases, and either keeps the mind suspended, or perhaps makes it rest in a conviction that the perception is erroneous.

WITH regard to the evidence of my own senses, though I cannot admit, that the essence of belief consists in the vivacity of the impression, I so far agree with our author, that vivacity and belief, in this case, are always conjoined. A mountain I have once seen, I believe to be existing, though I am a thousand miles from it; and the image or idea I have of that mountain, is more lively and more distinct, than of any I can form merely by the force of imagination. But this is far from being the case, as above observed, of ideas raised in my mind by the force of language.

BELIEF arising from the evidence of others, rests upon a different foundation. Veracity, and a disposition to believe, are corresponding principles in the nature of man; and, in the main, these principles are so adjusted, that men are not often deceived. The disposition we have to believe, is qualified by the opinion we have  
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of the witness, and the nature of the story he relates. But supposing a concurrence of all other circumstances to prompt our belief, yet if the speaker pretend only to amuse, without confining himself to truth, his narration will not, in the smallest degree, prompt our belief, let him enliven it with the strongest colours that poetry is master of.

I SHALL only add, that though our own senses, and the testimony of others, are the proper causes of belief ; yet that these causes are more or less efficacious, according to our present temper of mind. Hope and fear are influenced by passion, so is belief. Hope and fear are modifications of our conception of future events. If the event be agreeable, and the probability of its existence be great, our conception of its existence takes on a modification which is called *hope*. If the event be extremely agreeable, and the probability of its existing do greatly preponderate, our hope is increased proportionally, and sometimes is converted into a firm belief, that it will really happen. Upon weak minds, the delightfulness of the expected event will, of itself, have that effect. The imagination, fired with the prospect, augments the probability, till it convert it to a firm persuasion or belief. On the other hand, if fear get the ascendant, by a conceived improbability

probability of the existence of the event, the mind desponds, and fear is converted into a firm belief that the event will not happen. The operations of the mind are quite similar, where the event in view is disagreeable.

ESSAY

## E S S A Y II.

### *Of the* IDEA of SELF, and of PERSONAL IDENTITY.

**H**AD we no original impressions but those of the external senses, according to the author of the treatise of human nature, we never could have any consciousness of *self*; because such consciousness cannot arise from any external object. Mankind would be in a perpetual reverie; ideas would be constantly floating in the mind; and no man be able to connect his ideas with *himself*. Neither would there be any idea of *personal identity*. For a man cannot consider himself to be the same person, in different circumstances, when he hath no idea nor consciousness of *himself* at all.

BEINGS there may be who are thus constituted: but man is none of these beings. It is an undoubted truth, that he hath an original perception or consciousness of himself, and of his existence; which, for the most part, accompanies every one of his perceptions and ideas, and every action of his mind and body. I say, for the most part; for the faculty or internal sense which is the cause of this peculiar perception,



perception, is not always in action. In a dead sleep we have no consciousness of self. We dream sometimes without this consciousness; and even some of our waking minutes pass without it. A reverie is nothing else, but a wandering of the mind through its ideas, without carrying along the perception of self.

THIS consciousness or perception of self is of the liveliest kind. Self-preservation is every one's peculiar duty; and the vivacity of this perception is necessary to make us attentive to our own interest, and particularly to shun every appearance of danger. When a man is in a reverie, he has no circumspection, nor any manner of attention to himself.

IT is remarkable, that one hath scarce any chance to fall asleep, till this perception vanish. Its vivacity keeps the mind in a certain degree of agitation, which bars sleep. A fall of water disposes to sleep. It fixes the attention, both by sound and sight, and, without creating much agitation, occupies the mind, so as to make it forget itself. Reading of some books hath the same effect.

IT is this perception or consciousness of self, carried through all the different stages of life, and all the variety of action, which is the foundation of *personal identity*. It is by means of this

this perception, that I consider myself to be the same person, in all varieties of fortune, and in every change of life.

THE main purpose of this short essay, is to introduce an observation, that it is not by any argument or reasoning I conclude myself to be the same person I was ten years ago. This conclusion rests entirely upon the perception of identity, which accompanies me through all my changes, and which is the only connecting principle that binds together all the various thoughts and actions of my life. Far less is it by any argument, or chain of reasoning, that I discover my own existence. It would be strange indeed, if every man's existence were kept a secret from him, till the celebrated argument was invented, that *cogito ergo sum*. And if a fact that to common understanding appears self-evident, is not to be relied on without an argument; why should I take for granted, without an argument, that I think, more than that I exist? For surely I am not more conscious of thinking than of existing.

UPON this subject I shall just suggest a thought, which will be more fully insisted on afterwards; that any doctrine which leads to a distrust of our senses, must land in universal scepticism.

scepticism. If natural perceptions, whether from internal or external senses, are not admitted as evidence of truth, I cannot see, that we can be certain of any fact whatever. It is clear, from what is now observed, that, upon this sceptical system, we cannot be certain even of our own existence.

E S S A Y

## E S S A Y     III.

### *Of the AUTHORITY of our SENSES.*

**I**N several instances things appear to us different from what they truly are; and so far our senses may be termed delusive. These instances are of two sorts. One is, when the deception is occasioned by indisposition of the organ, remoteness of place, grossness of the medium, or the like; which distort the appearance of objects, and make them be seen double, or greater or less than they really are. In such instances, the perception is always faint, obscure, or confused: and they no way invalidate the authority of the senses, in general, when, abstracting from such accidental obstructions, the perception is lively, strong, and distinct. In the other sort, there is a deception established by the laws of nature; as in the case of secondary qualities, taken notice of in the essay upon liberty and necessity; whence it was inferred, that nature does not always give us such correct perceptions as correspond to the philosophic truth of things. These exceptions notwithstanding, the testimony of our senses still remains a sufficient ground of confidence and trust. For, in all these cases, where there is this sort of established deception, nature furnishes means for

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coming at the truth. In the foregoing instance of secondary qualities, philosophy easily corrects the false appearances, and teacheth us, that they are to be considered as impressions made upon the mind, and not as qualities of the object. A remedy being thus provided to the deception, our belief, so far as it can be influenced by reason, is the more confirmed, with regard to our other perceptions, where there is no appearance of illusion. But this is not the whole of the matter. When any sense presents to our view an appearance that may be called deceitful, we plainly discover some useful purpose intended. The deceit is not the effect of an imperfect or arbitrary constitution; but wisely contrived, to give us such notice of things as may best suit the purposes of life. From this very consideration, we are the more confirmed in the veracity of nature. Singular instances, in which our senses are accommodated to the uses of life, rather than to the strictness of truth, are rational exceptions, which serve the more firmly to establish the general rule. And, indeed, when we have nothing but our senses to direct our conduct with regard to external objects, it would be strange, if there should be any just ground for a general distrust of them. But there is no such thing. There is nothing to which all mankind are more necessarily determined, than to put confidence in their senses. We entertain no  
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doubt of their authority, because we are so constituted, that it is not in our power to doubt.

WHEN the authority of our senses is thus founded on the necessity of our nature, and confirmed by constant experience, it cannot but appear strange, that it should come into the thought of any man to call it in question. But the influence of novelty is great ; and when a man of a bold genius, in spite of common sense, will strike out new paths to himself, it is not easy to foresee, how far his airy metaphysical notions may carry him. A late author, who gives us a treatise concerning the principles of human knowledge, by denying the reality of external objects, strikes at the root of the authority of our senses, and thereby paves the way to the most inveterate scepticism. For what reliance can we have upon our senses, if they deceive us in a point so material ? If we can be prevailed upon to doubt of the reality of external objects, the next step will be, to doubt of what passes in our own minds, of the reality of our ideas and perceptions ; for we have not a stronger consciousness, nor a clearer conviction of the one, than of the other. And the last step will be, to doubt of our own existence ; for it is shown in the essay immediately foregoing, that we have no certainty of this fact, but what depends upon sense and feeling.

IT is reported, that Dr Berkeley, the author of the above-mentioned treatise, was moved to adopt this whimsical opinion, to get free from some arguments urged by materialists against the existence of the Deity. If so, unhappy has been the experiment: for this doctrine, if it should not lead to universal scepticism, affords, at least, a shrewd argument in favour of Atheism. If I can only be conscious of what passes in my own mind, and if I cannot trust my senses when they give me notice of external and independent existences; it follows, that I am the only being in the world; at least, that I can have no evidence from my senses, of any other being, body or spirit. This is certainly an unwary concession; because it deprives us of our chief or only means for attaining knowledge of the Deity. Laying aside sense and feeling, this learned divine will find it a difficult task, to point out by what other means we discover the foregoing important truth. But of this more afterwards.

WERE there nothing else in view, but to establish the reality of external objects, it would be scarce worth while to bestow much thought, in solving metaphysical paradoxes against their existence, which are better confuted by common sense and experience. But as the foregoing doctrine appears to have very extensive consequences, and to strike at the root of the most valuable branches of human knowledge; an attempt

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tempt to re-establish the authority of our senses, by detecting the fallacy of the arguments that have been urged against it, may, it is hoped, not be unacceptable to the public. The attempt, at any rate, is necessary in this work; the main purpose of which is, to show, that our senses, external and internal, are the true sources from whence the knowledge of the Deity is derived to us.

IN order to afford satisfaction upon a subject which is easier felt than expressed, it will be proper to give a distinct analysis of the operations of those senses by which we perceive external objects. And if this be once clearly apprehended, it will not be a matter of difficulty, to answer the several objections which have been urged against their existence.

THE perceptions of the external senses are of different kinds. Some we have at the organs of sense, such as smelling, tasting, touching. Some we have as from a distance, such as hearing and seeing. From the sense of touching are derived the perceptions of body, solidity and external existence. Laying my hand upon this table, I perceive a thing smooth and hard, pressing upon my hand, and which is perceived as more distant from me than my hand is. From sight we have the perceptions of motion and of colour; and from sight as well as



from touch, those of extension and figure. But it is more material to observe, upon the present subject, that from sight as well as touch, we have the perception of things as having an independent and continued or permanent existence.

LET us endeavour to explain this circumstance of independency and permanent existence of the objects of sight and touch; for it is a cardinal point. To begin with objects of sight: I cast my eye upon a tree, and perceive colour, figure, extension, and sometimes motion. If this be a complete analysis of the perception, substance is not discoverable by sight. But upon attentively examining this perception, to try if there be any thing more in it, I find one circumstance omitted, that the foregoing particulars are not perceived as so many separate existences, having no relation to each other, but as closely united and connected. When looking around on different objects, I perceive colour in one quarter, motion in a second, and extension in a third; the appearances these make in my mind are in nothing similar to the impression made by a tree, where the extension, motion, and other qualities, are introduced into the mind as intimately united and connected. But in what manner are they united and connected? Of this every person can give an account; that they are perceived as inhering in or belonging to some *substance or thing*, of which they are  
*qualities;*

*qualities*; and that, by their reference to this substance or thing, they are thus closely united and connected. Thus it is that the perception of *substance*, as well as of *qualities*, is derived from sight. And it is also to be attended to, as a part of the total perception, that as the qualities appear to belong to their substance, and to inhere in it, so both the substance and its qualities, which we call the tree, are perceived as altogether independent of us, as really existing, and as having a permanent existence.

A SIMILAR impression is made upon us by means of the sense of feeling. It is observed above, that, from the touch, we have the perceptions of body, solidity and external existence; and we have, from the same sense, the perceptions of softness and hardness, smoothness and roughness. Now, when I lay my hand upon this table, I have a perception, not only of smoothness, hardness, figure, and extension, but also of a thing I call *body*, of which the particulars now mentioned are perceived as *qualities*. Smoothness, hardness, extension, and figure, are perceived, not as separate and unconnected existences, but as inhering in and belonging to something I call *body*, which is really existing, and which hath an independent and permanent existence. And it is this body, with its several qualities, which I express by the word *table*.

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THE foregoing analysis of the perceptions of sight and touch, will be best illustrated by a comparison with the perceptions of the other senses. I hear a sound, or I feel a smell. These are not perceived as the qualities or properties of any body, thing, or substance. They make their appearance in the mind as simple existences; and do not suggest any perception of independency, or permanent existence. Did seeing and feeling carry us no farther, we never could have the least conception of substance.

IT is not a little surprising, that philosophers, who discourse so currently of *qualities*, should affect so much doubt and hesitation about *substance*; seeing these are relative ideas, and imply each other. For what other reason do we call figure a quality, but that we perceive it, not as a separate existence, but as belonging to something that is figured; and which thing we call *substance*, because it is not a property of any other thing, but is a thing which subsists by itself, or hath an independent existence. Did we perceive figure as we perceive sound, it would not be considered as a quality. In a word, a quality is not intelligible, unless upon supposition of some other thing, of which it is the quality. Sounds indeed, and smells, are also considered as qualities. But this proceeds from habit, not from original perception. For, having once acquired the distinction betwixt a *thing* and its *qualities*,

*lities*, and finding sound and smell more to resemble *qualities* than *substances*, we readily come into the use of considering them as qualities.

ANOTHER observation occurs with regard to those things which by the sight and touch are perceived as qualities ; that we cannot form a conception of them, independent of the beings to which they belong. It is not in our power to separate, even in imagination, colour, figure, motion, and extension, from body or substance. There is no such thing as conceiving motion by itself, abstracted from some body which is in motion. Let us try ever so often, our attempts will be in vain, to form an idea of a triangle independent of a body which has that figure. We cannot conceive a body that is not figured ; and we can as little conceive a figure without a body ; for this would be to conceive a figure as having a separate existence, at the same time that we conceive it as having no separate existence ; or to conceive it, at once, to be a quality, and not a quality. Thus it comes out, that *substance* makes a part, not only of every perception of sight and touch, but of every conception we can form of colour, figure, extension, and motion. Taking in the whole train of our ideas, there is not one more familiar to us, than that of *substance*, a being or thing which hath qualities.

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WHEN these things are considered, I cannot readily discover what wrong conception of the matter hath made Locke talk so obscurely and indistinctly of the idea of substance. It is no wonder he should be difficulted to form an idea of substance in general, abstracted from all properties, when such abstraction is altogether beyond the reach of our conception. But there is nothing more easy, than to form an idea of any particular substance with its properties; yet this has some how escaped him. When he forms the idea of a horse or a stone, he admits nothing into the idea, but a collection of several simple ideas of sensible qualities\*. “And because,” says he, “we cannot conceive how these qualities should subsist alone, nor one in another, we suppose them existing in and supported by some common subject, which support we denote by the name *substance*; though it be certain we have no clear or distinct idea of that thing we suppose a support.” A single question would have unfolded the whole mystery. How comes it, that we cannot conceive qualities to subsist alone, nor one in another? Locke himself must have given the following answer, That the thing is not conceivable; because a property or quality cannot subsist without the thing to which it belongs; for if it did, that it would cease to be a property or quality. Why

\* Book 2. chap. 23.

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then does he make so faint an inference, as that we suppose qualities existing in and supported by some common subject? It is not a bare supposition: it is an essential part of the idea; it is necessarily suggested to us by sight and touch. He observes, that we have no clear nor distinct idea of substance. If he mean, that we have no clear nor distinct idea of substance abstracted from properties, the thing is so true, that we can form no idea of substance at all abstracted from properties. But it is also true, that we can form no idea of properties abstracted from substance. The ideas both of substance and of quality are perfectly in the same condition in this respect; which it is surprising philosophers should so little attend to. At the same time, we have clear and distinct ideas of many things as they exist, though perhaps we have not a complete idea of any one thing. We have such ideas of things as serve to all the useful purposes of life. It is true, our senses reach not beyond the external properties of beings. We have no direct perception of the essence and internal properties of any thing. These we discover from the effects produced. But had we senses to perceive directly the essence and internal properties of things, our idea of them would indeed be more full and complete, but not more clear and distinct, than at present. For, even upon that supposition, we could form no notion of substance, but by its properties, internal

ternal and external. To form an idea of a thing abstracted from all its properties, is impossible.

THE following is the sum of what is above laid down. By sight and touch we have the perceptions of substance and body, as well as of qualities. It is not figure, extension, motion, that we perceive; but a thing figured, extended, and moving. As we cannot form an idea of substance abstracted from qualities, so we cannot form an idea of qualities abstracted from substance. They are relative ideas, and imply each other. This is one point gained. Another is, that the idea of substance or body thus attained, comprehends in it independent and permanent existence; that is, something which exists independent of our perceptions, and remains the same, whether we perceive it or not.

IN this manner are we made sensible of the real existence of things without us. The perception is so strong, and the conviction, which makes a part of the perception, that sceptical arguments, however cunningly devised, may puzzle, but can never get the better: for such is our constitution, that we can entertain no doubt of the authority of our senses in this particular. At the same time, every sort of experience confirms the truth of our perceptions. I see a tree at a distance, of a certain shape and size. Walking forward, I find it in its place, by the resistance

ance it makes to my body ; and, so far as I can discover by touch, it is of the same shape and size which my eye represents it to be. I return day after day, year after year, and find the same object, with no other variation, but what the seasons and time produce. The tree is at last cut down. It is no longer to be seen or felt.

To overthrow the authority of our senses, a few singular instances in which they appear fallacious, are of no weight. And to confirm this branch of the argument, we need but compare the evidence of our senses with the evidence of human testimony. The comparison cannot fail to afford satisfaction. Veracity, and a disposition to rely upon human evidence, are corresponding principles, which greatly promote society. Among individuals, these principles are found to be of different degrees of strength. But, in the main, they are so proportioned to each other, that men are not often deceived. In this case, it would be an inconclusive argument, that we ought not to give credit to any man's testimony, because some men are defective in the principle of veracity. The only effect such instances have, or ought to have, is, to correct our propensity to believe, and to bring on a habit of suspending our belief, till circumstances be examined. The evidence of our senses rises undoubtedly much higher than the evidence of human testimony. And if we continue to put trust in the

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latter, after many instances of being deceived, we have better reason to put trust in the former, were the instances of being deceived equally numerous ; which is plainly not the fact. When people are in sound health of mind and body, they are very seldom misled by their senses.

IF I have been so lucky as to put this subject in its proper light, it will not be a difficult task to clear it of any doubts which may arise, upon perusing the above-mentioned treatise. The author boldly denies the existence of matter, and the reality of the objects of sense ; contending, that there is nothing really existing without the mind of an intelligent being ; in a word, reducing all to be a world of ideas. “ It is an opinion strangely prevailing among men,” says he, “ that houses, mountains, rivers, and in a word “ all sensible objects, have an existence, natural “ or real, distinct from their being perceived by “ the understanding.” He ventures to call this a manifest contradiction ; and his argument against the reality of these objects, is in the following words. “ The forementioned objects “ are things perceived by sense. We cannot “ perceive any thing but our own ideas or perceptions ; therefore what we call men, houses, “ mountains, &c. can be nothing else but ideas “ or perceptions.” This argument shall be examined afterwards, with the respect that is due to its author. It shall only be taken notice of  
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by the way, that, supposing mankind to be under so strange and unaccountable a delusion, as to mistake their ideas for men, houses, mountains, &c. it will not follow, that there is in this any manifest contradiction, or any contradiction at all. For deception is a very different thing from contradiction. But he falls from this high pretension, in the after part of his work, to argue more consistently, “that, supposing solid, “figured, and moveable substances, to exist “without the mind, yet we could never come “to the knowledge of this \*.” Which is true, if our senses bear no testimony of the fact. And he adds †, “that, supposing no bodies to exist “without the mind, we might have the very same “reasons for supposing the existence of external “bodies that we have now.” Which may be true, supposing our senses to be fallacious.

THE Doctor's fundamental proposition is, That we can perceive nothing but our own ideas or perceptions. This, at best, is an ambiguous expression. For taking perception in one sense, as signifying every object we perceive, it is a mere identical proposition, *sciz.* that we perceive nothing but what we perceive. But taking the Doctor's proposition as intended, that we can have no perception or consciousness of any thing

\* Sect. 18.

† Sect. 20.

but what exists in our own minds, he had certainly no reason to take this assertion for granted: and yet he hath never once attempted a proof of it; though, in so bold an undertaking as that of annihilating the whole universe, his own mind excepted, he had no reason to hope, that an assertion so singular, and so contradictory to common sense and apprehension, would be taken upon his word. It may be true, that it is not easy to explain, nor even to comprehend, by what means we perceive external objects. But our ignorance is, in most cases, a very indifferent argument against matter of fact. At this rate, he may take upon him equally to deny the bulk of the operations in the material world, which have not hitherto been explained by him or others. And at bottom, it is perhaps as difficult to explain the manner of perceiving our own ideas, or the impressions made upon us, as to explain the manner of perceiving external objects. The Doctor, besides, ought to have considered, that, by this bold doctrine, he, in effect, sets bounds to the power of nature, or of the Author of nature. If it was in the power of the Almighty to bestow upon man a faculty of perceiving external objects, he has certainly done it. For supposing the existence of external objects, we have no conception how they could be otherways manifested to us than in fact they are. Therefore the Doctor was in the right to assert, that a faculty in man to perceive external objects,

objects, would be a contradiction, and consequently a privilege not in the power of the Deity to bestow upon him. He perceived the necessity of carrying his argument so far; at the same time, sensible that this was not to be made out, he never once attempts to point at any thing like a contradiction. And if he cannot prove it to be a contradiction, the question is at an end: for supposing only the fact to be possible, we have the very highest evidence of its reality that our nature is capable of, not less than the testimony of our senses.

IT hath been urged in support of this doctrine, that nothing is present to the mind, but the impressions made upon it; and that it cannot be conscious of any thing but what is present. This difficulty is easily solved. For the proposition, "That we cannot be conscious of any thing but what is present to the mind, or passés within it," is taken for granted, as if it were self-evident: and yet the direct contrary is an evident fact, *sciz.* that we are conscious of many things which are not present to the mind; that is, which are not, like perceptions and ideas, within the mind. Nor is there any manner of difficulty to conceive, that an impression may be made upon us by an external object, in such a manner as to raise a direct perception of the external object itself. When we attend to the operations of the external

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senses,

senses, we discover that external objects make not impressions all of them in the same manner. In some instances we feel the impression, and are conscious of it, as an impression. In others, being quite unconscious of the impression, we perceive only the external object. And to give full satisfaction to the reader upon the present subject, it may perhaps not be fruitless, briefly to run over the operations of the several external senses, by which the mind is made conscious of external objects, and of their properties.

AND, first, with regard to the sense of smelling, which gives us no notice of external existences. Here the operation is of the simplest kind. It is no more but an impression made at the organ, which is perceived as an impression. Experience, it is true, and habit, lead us to ascribe this particular impression to some external thing as its cause. Thus, when a particular impression is made upon us, termed the *sweet smell of a rose*, we learn to ascribe it to a rose, because that peculiar impression upon the organ of smelling, is always found to accompany the sight and touch of the body called a *rose*. But that this connection is the child of experience only, will be evident from the following considerations; that when a new smell is perceived, we are utterly at a loss what cause to ascribe it to; and that when a child feels a smell, it is not led to ascribe it to any cause whatever. In this case, there can be no  
other

other difficulty, but to comprehend in what manner the mind becomes conscious of an impression made upon the body. Upon which it seems sufficient to observe, that we are kept entirely ignorant in what manner the soul and body are connected. But, from our ignorance of the manner of this connection, to deny the reality of external existences, reducing all to a world of ideas, is in reality not less whimsical, than if one, after admitting the reality of external existences, should go about to deny, that we have any perception of them; merely because we cannot fully account for the manner of this perception, nor how a material substance can communicate itself to the mind, which is spirit, and not matter. The same observations may be applied to the sense of hearing; with this difference only, that a sound is not perceived, at least not originally, as an impression made at the organ, but merely as an existence in the mind.

IN the senses of tasting and touching, we are conscious not only of an impression made at the organ, but also of a body which makes the impression. When I lay my hand upon this table, the impression is of a hard smooth body, which resists the motion of my hand. In this impression there is nothing to create the least suspicion of fallacy. The body acts where it is, and it acts merely by resistance. There occurs not,  
therefore,

therefore, any difficulty in this case, other than that mentioned above, *sciz.* after what manner an impression made at an organ of the body, is communicated to, or perceived by the mind. We shall only add upon this head, that touch alone, which is the least intricate of all our senses, is sufficient to overthrow the Doctor's whole pompous system. We have, from that sense, the fullest and clearest perception of external existences that can be conceived, subject to no doubt, ambiguity, nor even cavil. And this perception must, at the same time, support the authority of our other senses, when they give us notice of external existences.

WHAT remains to be examined, is the sense of seeing, which, it is presumed, the Doctor had chiefly in view, when he argues against the reality of external existences. And, indeed, the operation of perceiving objects at a distance, is so curious, and so singular, that it is not surprising a rigid philosopher should be puzzled about it. In this case, there is a difficulty, which applies with some shew of strength, and which possibly has had weight with our author, though it is never once mentioned by him. It is, that no being can act but where it is; and that a body at a distance cannot act upon the mind, more than the mind upon it. I candidly own, that this argument appears to evince the necessity of some intermediate means in the act of vision. One  
means

means is suggested by matter of fact. The image of a visible object is painted upon the retina of the eye. And it is not more difficult to conceive, that this image may be some how conveyed to the mind, than to conceive the manner of its being painted upon the retina. This circumstance puts the operation of vision, in one respect, upon the same footing with that of touching; both being performed by means of an impression made at the organ. There is indeed this essential difference, that the impression of touch is felt as such, whereas the impression of sight is not felt: we are not conscious of any such impression, but singly of the object itself which makes the impression.

AND here a curious piece of mechanism presents itself to our view. Though an impression is made upon the mind, by means of the image painted upon the retina, whereby the external object is perceived; yet nature hath carefully concealed this impression from us, in order to remove all ambiguity, and to give us a distinct perception of the object itself, and of that only. In touching and tasting, the impression made at the organ, is so closely connected with the body which makes the impression, that the perception of the impression, along with that of the body, creates no confusion nor ambiguity, the body being perceived as operating where it really is. But were the impression of a visible object perceived,



ceived, as made on the retina, which is the organ of sight, all objects behoved to be seen as within the eye. It is doubted among naturalists, whether outness or distance is at all discoverable by sight, and whether that appearance be not the effect of experience. But bodies, and their operations, are so closely connected in place, that were we conscious of an organic impression at the retina, the mind would have a constant propensity to place the body there also; which would be a circumstance extremely perplexing in the act of vision, as setting feeling and experience in perpetual opposition; enough to poison all the pleasure we enjoy by that noble sense.

IN so short-sighted a creature as man, it is the worst reason in the world for denying any well-attested fact, that he cannot account for the manner in which it is brought about. It is true, we cannot explain after what manner it is, that, by the intervention of the rays of light, the beings and things around us are laid open to our view: but it is great arrogance, to pretend to doubt of the fact upon that account; for it is, in effect, maintaining, that there is nothing in nature but what we can explain.

THE perception of objects at a distance, by intervention of rays of light, involves no inconsistency nor impossibility: and unless this could be asserted, we have no reason nor foundation  
to

to call in question the authority of the perception. And after all, this particular step of the operation of vision, is, at bottom, not more difficult to be conceived, or accounted for, than the other steps, of which no man entertains a doubt. It is, perhaps, not easy to explain how the image of an external body is painted upon the *retina tunica* ; and no person pretends to explain how this image is communicated to the mind. Why then should we hesitate about the last step, to wit, the perception of external objects, more than about the two former, when they are all equally supported by the most unexceptionable evidence ? The whole operation of vision far surpasses human knowledge ; but not more than the operation of magnetism, electricity, and a thousand other natural appearances ; and our ignorance of the cause, ought not to make us suspect deceit in the one case, more than in the other.

WE shall conclude this subject with the following reflection. Whether our perception of the reality of external objects correspond to the truth of things, or whether it be a mere illusion, is a question, which, from the nature of the thing, cannot admit of a strict demonstration. One thing is certain, that supposing the reality of external objects, we can form no conception of their being displayed to us in a more lively and convincing manner, than in  
fact

fact is done. Why then call a thing in doubt, of which we have as good evidence as human nature is capable of receiving? But we cannot call it in doubt, otherways than in speculation, and even then but for a moment. We have a thorough conviction of the reality of external objects; it rises to the highest certainty of belief; and we act, in consequence of it, with the greatest security of not being deceived. Nor are we in fact deceived. When we put the matter to a trial, every experiment answers to our perceptions, and confirms us more and more in our belief.

ESSAY

## ESSAY IV.

### *Of our* IDEA of POWER.

**T**HE subject proposed to be handled in the present essay is the idea of *power*, and its origin. This term is found in all languages: we talk familiarly, of a power in one body to produce certain effects, and of a capacity in another body to have certain effects produced upon it. Yet authors have differed strangely about the foundation of these ideas; and, after all that has been said, it seems yet to be a matter of uncertainty, whether they be suggested by reason, by experience, or by what other means. This subject deserves our attention the more, that the bulk of useful knowledge depends upon it. Without some insight into causes and their effects, we should be a very imperfect race of beings. And, with regard to the present undertaking, this subject must not, at any rate, be overlooked; because from it, principally, is derived any knowledge we have of the Deity, as will afterwards be made evident.

POWER denotes a simple idea, which, upon that account, cannot admit of a definition. But no person is, or can be at a loss about the

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meaning.

meaning. Every action we perceive, gives us a notion of power : for a productive cause is implied in our perception of every action or event \* ; and the very idea of cause comprehends a power of producing its effect. Let us only reflect upon the perception we have when we see a stone thrown into the air out of one's hand. In the perception of this action are included contiguity of the hand and stone, the motion of the person's hand with the stone in it, and the separate motion of the stone following the other circumstances in point of time. The first circumstance is necessary to put the man in a condition to exert his power upon the stone ; the second is the actual exertion of the power ; and the last is the effect produced by that exertion. But these circumstances, which include both contiguity and succession, make no part of the idea of power ; which is conceived as an inherent property subsisting in the man, not merely when he is exerting it, but even when he is at rest. That all men have this very idea, is a fact not to be controverted. The only doubt is, whence it is derived ; from what source it springs.

THAT reason cannot help us out, will be evident. For reason must always have some object to employ itself upon. There must be known *data* or principles, to lead us to the discovery of

\* Essay of liberty and necessity.

things

things which are connected with these *data* or principles. But with regard to power, which makes a necessary connection betwixt a cause and its effect, we have no *data* nor principles to lead us to the discovery. We are not acquainted with the beings and things about us, otherways than by certain qualities and properties obvious to the external senses. Power is none of these ; nor is there any connection which we can discover betwixt power and any of these. In a word, we have not the least foundation for concluding power in any body, till it once exert its power. If it be urged, That the effects produced are *data*, from which we can infer a cause by a process of reasoning, and consequently a power in the cause to produce these effects ; I answer, That when a new thing or quality is produced, when in general any change is brought about, it is extremely doubtful, whether, by any process of reasoning, we can conclude it to be an effect, so as necessarily to require a cause of its existence. That we do conclude it to be an effect, is most certain. But that we can draw any such conclusion, merely from reason, I do not clearly see. What leads me, I confess, to this way of thinking, is, that men of the greatest genius have been unsuccessful, in attempting to prove, that every thing which begins to exist, must have a cause of its existence. “ Whatever “ is produced (says Locke) without any cause, is “ produced by *nothing* ; or, in other words,

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“ has

" has *nothing* for its cause. But *nothing* can  
 " never be a cause, no more than it can be  
 " *something*." This is obviously begging the  
 question. To affirm that *nothing* is the cause,  
 is taking for granted that a cause is necessary ;  
 which is the very point undertaken to be made  
 out. Dr Clarke's argument labours under the  
 same defect. " Every thing (he says) must  
 " have a cause ; for if any thing wanted a cause,  
 " it would produce itself ; that is, exist before  
 " it existed ; which is impossible." If a thing  
 can exist without a cause, there is no necessity it  
 should produce itself, or that any thing should  
 produce it. In short, there does not appear to  
 me any contradiction in the proposition, That  
 a thing may begin to exist without a cause :  
 and therefore I dare not declare the fact to be  
 impossible. But sense affords me a conviction,  
 that nothing begins to exist without a cause,  
 though reason cannot afford me a demonstration  
 of it. This matter will be opened afterwards.  
 At present, it is sufficient to observe, that the con-  
 viction in this case is complete, and carries so  
 much authority with it, as scarce to admit a bare  
 conception, that the thing can possibly be other-  
 ways. This subject, at the same time, affords a  
 new instance of what we have had more than  
 once occasion to observe. Fond of arguments  
 drawn from the nature of things, we are too  
 apt to apply such arguments without discretion ;  
 and to call that demonstration, which, at bot-  
 tom,

tom, is a conviction founded on sense merely. Our perceptions, which work silently, and without effort, are apt to be overlooked; and we vainly imagine, we can demonstrate every proposition which we perceive to be true.

IT will be pretty obvious, that the idea of power is not deducible from experience, more than from reason. We can learn nothing from experience merely, but that two objects may have been constantly conjoined in time past, such as fire and heat, the sun and light. But, in the first place, all that can be gathered from such facts, comes far short of our idea of cause and effect, or of a power in one body to produce some change in another. In the second place, experience, which relateth to the actions only of the particular bodies we are acquainted with, cannot aid us to discover power in any body that we have not formerly seen in action. Yet, from the very first operation of such a body, we have the perception of cause and effect, which therefore cannot be from experience. And, in the last place, as experience in no case reaches to futurity, our idea of power, did it depend upon experience, could only look backward: with regard to every new production, depending upon causes even the most familiar, we should be utterly at a loss to form any idea of power.

IT being now evident, that our idea of power



is not derived, either from reason or experience, we shall endeavour to trace out its true foundation. Running over the subject, the following thoughts occur, which I shall set before the reader in their natural order. As man, in his life and actions, is necessarily connected both with the animate and inanimate world; he would be utterly at a loss to conduct himself, without some acquaintance with the beings around him, and their operations. His external senses give him all the intelligence that is necessary, not only for being, but for well-being. They discover to him, in the first place, the existence of external things. But this would not be sufficient, unless they also discovered to him their powers and operations. The sense of seeing is the principal means of his intelligence. I have explained, in a former essay, that perception by which we discover the existence of external objects. And when these are put in motion, whereby certain things follow, it is by another perception that we discover a relation betwixt certain objects, which makes one be termed the cause, the other the effect. I need scarce repeat again, that simple perceptions and ideas cannot otherways be explained than by suggesting the terms which denote them. All that can be done in this case, is to request of the reader, to attend to what passes in his mind, when he sees one billiard-ball struck against another, or a tree which the wind is blowing down, or a stone thrown into the  
air

air out of one's hand. We are obviously so constituted, as not only to perceive the one body acting, and exerting its power; but also to perceive, that the change in the other body is produced by *means* of that action or exertion of power. This change we perceive to be an *effect*; and we perceive a necessary connection betwixt the action and the effect, so as that the one must unavoidably follow the other.

As I discover power in external objects by the eye, so I discover power in my mind by an internal sense. By one act of the will, ideas are raised; by another act of the will, my limbs are put in motion. Attending to these operations, I perceive or feel the motion of my limbs, and the entry of ideas, to follow necessarily from the act of the will. In other words, I perceive or feel these to be effects, and the act of the will to be the cause.

AND that this feeling is involved in the very perception of the action, without taking in either reason or experience, may be illustrated by some plain observations. There is no relation more familiar, even to children, than that of cause and effect. The first time a child lifts a bit of bread, the perception it hath of this action, not only includes a conjunction of the hand with the bread, and that the motion of the latter follows the motion of the former; but

but it likewise includes that particular circumstance which is expressed by a power in the hand to lift the bread. Accordingly, we find no expression more familiar among children and rustics, nor better understood, than I *can* do this, I *can* do that. Further, as things are best illustrated by their contraries, let us put the case, of a being, if there be such a one, who, in viewing external objects, hath no idea of substance, but only of qualities; and who, in viewing motion, doth not perceive the change produced by it to be an effect, or any way connected with the motion, further than as following it in point of time. It appears extremely evident, that this supposed being can never have the idea of body, nor of its powers. Reason or experience can never give it the idea of body or substance, and far less of their powers.

IT is very true, we cannot discover power in any object, as we discover the object itself, merely by intuition. But the moment an alteration is produced by any object, we perceive that the object hath a power to produce that alteration; which leads to denominate the one a cause, and the other an effect. I do not assert, that we can never be in a mistake about this matter. Children often err, by attributing an effect to one cause instead of another, or by considering that to be a cause which is not. Mistakes of this kind are corrected by experience.

But

But they prove the reality of the perception of power, just as much as where our perceptions are agreeable to the truth of things.

AND with regard to the fallibility of the sense of seeing, when it points out to us causes and effects, the comparison may be justly instituted betwixt it and belief. The faculty which regulates belief is not infallible : it sometimes leads us into errors. Neither is the faculty infallible, by which we discern one thing to be a cause, another to be an effect. Yet both are exerted with sufficient certainty, to guide us through life, without many capital errors.

THE author of the treatise of human nature, has employed a world of reasoning, in searching for the foundation of our idea of power, and of necessary connection. And, after all his anxious researches, he can make no more of it, but, " That the idea of necessary connection, "*alias power or energy*, arises from a number " of instances, of one thing always following " another, which connects them in the imagination ; whereby we can readily foretell the " existence of the one from the appearance of " the other." And he pronounces, " That " this connection can never be suggested from " any one of these instances, surveyed in all " possible lights and positions \*." Thus he

\* Philosophical essays, essay 7.

places

places the essence of necessary connection or power upon that propensity which custom produces, to pass from an object to the idea of its usual attendant. And from these premisses, he draws a conclusion of a very extraordinary nature, and which he himself acknowledges to be not a little paradoxical. His words are:

“ Upon the whole, necessity is something that  
 “ exists in the mind, not in objects; nor is it  
 “ possible for us even to form the most distant  
 “ idea of it, considered as a quality in bodies.  
 “ The efficacy or energy in causes, is neither  
 “ placed in the causes themselves, nor in the  
 “ Deity, nor in the concurrence of these two  
 “ principles; but belongs entirely to the soul,  
 “ which considers the union of two or more ob-  
 “ jects in all past instances. It is here that the  
 “ real power of causes is placed, along with  
 “ their connection and necessity \*.”

HE may well admit this doctrine to be a violent paradox; because, in reality, it contradicts our natural perceptions, and wages war with the common sense of mankind. We cannot put this in a stronger light than our author himself does, in forming an objection against his own doctrine. “ What! the efficacy of causes lie  
 “ in the determination of the mind! as if causes  
 “ did not operate entirely independent of the

\* Treatise of human nature, vol. 1. p. 290. 291.

“ mind,

“ mind, and would not continue their opera-  
 “ tion, even though there was no mind existent  
 “ to contemplate them, or reason concerning  
 “ them. This is to reverse the order of na-  
 “ ture, and to make that secondary which is  
 “ really primary. To every operation there is  
 “ a power proportioned; and this power must  
 “ be placed on the body that operates. If we  
 “ remove the power from one cause, we must  
 “ ascribe it to another. But to remove it from  
 “ all causes, and bestow it on a being that is no  
 “ ways related to the cause or effect, but by  
 “ perceiving them, is a gross absurdity, and  
 “ contrary to the most certain principles of hu-  
 “ man reason\*.” In short, nothing is more  
 clear, than that, from the very sight of bodies  
 in motion, we have the idea of power, which  
 connects them together, in the relation of *cause*  
 and *effect*. This power is perceived as a quality  
 in the acting body, and by no means as an opera-  
 tion of the mind, or an easy transition of  
 thought from one object to another. And there-  
 fore, flatly to deny our perception of such a qua-  
 lity in bodies, as our author does, is taking up-  
 on him to contradict a plain matter of fact, of  
 which all the world can give testimony. He  
 may be at a loss indeed to discover the source of  
 this perception; because he can neither derive  
 it, nor the idea of substance, from his own prin-

\* Pag. 294.

principles.

principles. But it has been more than once observed, that it is too bold, to deny a fact, supported by the best evidence, merely because one is at a loss to discover the cause. At the same time, there is no manner of difficulty to lay open the foundation of these perceptions. Both of them are impressions of sight, as is clearly made out above.

AND to show, that our author's account of this matter comes far short of truth, it will be plain, from one or two instances, that though a constant connection of two objects, may, by habit or custom, produce a similar connection in the imagination; yet that a constant connection, whether in the imagination, or betwixt the objects themselves, doth by no means come up to our idea of power. Far from it. In a garrison, the soldiers constantly turn out at a certain beat of the drum. The gates of the town are opened and shut regularly, as the clock points at a certain hour. These connected facts are observed by a child, are associated in his mind, and the association becomes habitual during a long life. The man, however, above supposed, if not a changeling, never imagines the beat of the drum to be the cause of the motion of the soldiers; nor the pointing of the clock to a certain hour, to be the cause of the opening or shutting of the gates. He perceives the cause of these operations to be very different; and is not led  
into

into any mistake by the above-mentioned circumstances, however closely connected. Let us put another instance, still more apposite. Such is the human constitution, that we act necessarily, upon the existence of certain motives. The prospect of victuals makes a hungry man accelerate his pace. Respect to an ancient family moves him to take a wife. An object of distress prompts him to lay out his money, or venture his person. Yet no man dreams a motive to be the cause of action; though, if the doctrine of necessity hold true, here is not only a constant, but a necessary connection\*.

FROM the instance last given, it appears, that constant connection, and the other circumstances mentioned by our author, are far from coming up to our idea of *power*. There may be even

\* A thought or idea, it is obvious, cannot be the cause of action; cannot, of itself, produce motion. After what manner then does it operate? I explain the matter thus. The power of magnetism, or any other particular power in matter, by which the body endued with the power is impelled towards other bodies, cannot operate, if there be no other body placed within its sphere of activity. But placing another body there, the magnetic body is directly impelled towards this new body. Yet the new body is not the *cause* of the motion, but only the *occasion* of it; the condition of the power being such, that the body endued with it cannot operate, but with relation to another body within its sphere of action. Precisely in the same manner doth the mind act, upon presenting a thought or idea. The idea is not the *cause* of the action, but only the *occasion* of it. It is the mind which exerts the action; only it is so framed, that it cannot exert its powers, otherways than upon the presenting of certain objects to it.

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a necessary connection betwixt two objects, without putting them in the relation of *cause* and *effect*, and without involving a power in the one to produce the other. Our author, then, attempts rather too bold an enterprise, when he undertakes to argue mankind out of their senses. That we have such a perception of power as is above described, is a fact that cannot admit of the smallest controversy. And all that is left him, would he argue with any prospect of success, is, to question whether this perception doth in fact correspond to the truth of things. But he will not undertake so stubborn a task, as to prove this a delusive perception; when he must be sensible of the wonderful harmony that subsists betwixt it and the reality of causes and their effects. We have no reason to suspect deceit in this case, more than with regard to many other senses, some of which remain to be unfolded, that are wrought into the constitution of man, for wise and good purposes, and without which he would be a very irregular and defective being.

AND were it necessary to say more, upon a subject which indeed merits the utmost attention, we have, if I mistake not, this author's own evidence for us; which I consider as no mean evidence in any case; and which must be held of the greatest authority when given against himself. And this evidence he gives in his philosophical

phical essays. For though, in this work, he continues to maintain, "That necessity exists  
 " only in the mind, not in objects ; and that it  
 " is not possible for us even to form the most  
 " distant idea of it, considered as a quality in  
 " bodies ;" yet, in the course of the argument, he more than once discovers, that he himself is possessed of an idea of *power*, considered as a quality in bodies, though he has not attended to it. Thus he observes \*, " That nature conceals from us those powers and principles on  
 " which the influence of objects entirely depends." And of these powers and principles he gives several apt instances ; such as, a power or quality in bread to nourish ; a power by which bodies persevere in motion. This is not only owning an idea of power as a quality in bodies, but also owning the reality of this power. In another passage †, he observes, " That the particular powers by which all natural operations  
 " are performed, never appear to the senses ;" and " that experience does not lead us to the  
 " knowledge of the secret power by which one  
 " object produces another." What leads us to the knowledge of this secret power, is not at present the question. But here is the author's own acknowledgment, that he hath an idea of a power in one object to produce another ; for he cer-

\* London edition, p. 58.

† pag. 72.

tainly will not say, that he is here making use of words without having any ideas annexed to them. In one passage in particular \*, he talks distinctly and explicitly of “ a power in one object, by which it infallibly produces the other, and operates with the greatest certainty, and strongest necessity.” No master of language can give a description of power, considered as a quality in bodies, in more apt or more expressive terms. So difficult it is, to stifle or to disguise natural perceptions and sentiments †.

If the foregoing arguments have not prevailed, may not the following argument hope for success? Figure the simplest of all cases; a man rising from his seat, to walk in his chamber; and try to analyse the perception of this simple event. In the first place, is the man active or passive? Is he moved, or doth he move himself? No mortal is at a loss to understand these questions; and no mortal is at a loss to answer them. We have a distinct perception, that the man is not moved, but moves; or, which is the same, moves himself. Let us examine, in the next place, what is involved in the perception we have, when we see this man walking. Do we not say familiarly, doth not a child say, that he *can* walk? And what other thing do we mean

\* pag. 121

† Naturam expellas furca, tamen usque recurret.

by

by this expression, than that he hath a *power* to walk? Doth not the very idea of walking include in it a power to walk? In this instance, our author, unhappily for his argument, hath neither contiguity nor succession to recur to, for explaining his idea of power, imperfect as it is. And therefore, with regard to this instance, he must either admit, that we have an idea of power, considered as a quality in objects, or take upon him to deny, that we have any idea of power at all: for it is evident, that the idea of power, when it comprehends only a single object, can never be resolved into a connection in the imagination betwixt two or more objects. We have thus the perception of power from every action, be it of the simplest kind that can be figured. And having once acquired the idea of power exerted by an animal, to put itself in motion, we readily transfer that idea to the actions of bodies, animate and inanimate, upon each other. And, after all, with due regard to an author of very acute parts, I cannot help observing, that there is perhaps not one idea of all the train, which is more familiar to us, or more universal, than the idea of power.

HAVING thus ascertained the reality of our idea of power, as a quality in bodies, and traced it to its proper source, I shall close this essay with some observations upon causes and their effects. That we cannot discover power in any

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object,

object, otherways than by seeing it exert its power, is above observed. Therefore, we can never discover any object to be a cause, otherways than by the effect produced. But with regard to things caused or produced, the case is very different. For we can discover an object to be an effect, after the cause is removed, or when it is not at all seen. For instance, no one is at a loss to say, that a table or a chair is an effect produced. A child will ask, who made it? We perceive every event, every new object, to be an effect or production, the very conception of which involves the idea of a cause. Hence the maxim, "That nothing can fall out, no-  
 " thing begin to exist, without a cause;" in other words, "That every thing which begins to  
 " exist, must have a cause:" A maxim universally recognised, and admitted by all mankind as self-evident. Nor can this be attributed to experience. The perception is original, regarding singular objects and events, the causes of which are utterly unknown, not less than objects and events which depend upon familiar causes. Children and rustics are conscious of this relation, equally with those who have the most consummate experience of nature, and its operations\*.

FURTHER, the perception we have of any object as an effect, includes in it the percep-

\* See the essay upon liberty and necessity, p. 64.

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tion of a cause proportioned to the effect. If the object be an effect properly adapted to some end, the perception of it necessarily includes an intelligent designing cause. If the effect be some good end, brought about by proper means, the perception necessarily includes a designing and benevolent cause. Nor is it in our power, by any sort of constraint, to vary these perceptions, or to give them a modification different from what they have by nature. It may be in our power to conceive, but it is not in our power to believe, that a fine painting, a well-wrote poem, or a beautiful piece of architecture, can ever be the effect of chance, or of blind fatality. The supposition indeed, so far as we can discover, involves not any inconsistency in the nature of things. It may be possible, for any reason we have to the contrary, that a blind and undesigning cause may be productive of excellent effects. But our senses discover, what reason does not, that every object which appears beautiful, as adapted to an end or purpose, is the effect of a designing cause; and that every object which appears beautiful, as fitted to a good end or purpose, is the effect of a designing and benevolent cause. We are so constituted, that we cannot entertain a doubt of this, if we would. And, so far as we gather from experience, we are not deceived.

ESSAY



## E S S A Y V.

### *Of our KNOWLEDGE of FUTURE EVENTS.*

**W**HILE we are tied to this globe, some knowledge of the beings around us, and of their operations, is necessary; because, without it, we should be utterly at a loss how to conduct ourselves. This subject is handled in two former essays. But were our knowledge limited to this subject, it would not be sufficient for our well-being, and scarce for our preservation. It is likewise necessary, that we have some knowledge of future events; for about these we are mostly employed. A man will not sow, if he hath not a prospect of reaping: he will not build a house, if he hath not some security, that it will stand firm for years. Man is possessed of this valuable branch of knowledge: he can foretell future events. There is no doubt of the fact. The difficulty only is, what are the means employed in making the discovery. It is, indeed, an established maxim, That the course of nature continues uniformly the same; and that things will be as they have been. But, from what premisses we draw this conclusion, is not obvious. Uniformity in the operations of nature, with regard to time past, is discovered by experience. But



But of future time, having no experience, the maxim assuredly cannot be derived from that source. Neither will reason help us out. It is true, the production of one thing by another, even in a single instance, implies a power; and this power is necessarily connected with its effect. But as power is an internal property, not discoverable but by the effects produced, we can never, by any chain of reasoning, conclude power to be in any body, except in the instant of operation. The power, for ought we know, may be at an end from that very instant. We cannot so much as conclude, from any deduction of reason, that this earth, the sun, or any one being, will exist to-morrow. And, supposing their future existence to be discoverable by reason, we are not so much acquainted with the nature or essence of any one thing, as to discover a necessary connection betwixt it and its powers, that the one subsisting, the other must also subsist. There is nothing more easily conceived, than that the most active being shall at once be deprived of all its activity: and a thing that may be conceived, can never be proved inconsistent or impossible. An appeal to past experience, will not carry us through. The sun has afforded us light and heat from the beginning of the world. But what reason have we to conclude, that its power of giving light and heat must continue; when it is as easy to conceive powers to be limited in point of time, as to conceive them perpetual?

perpetual? If to help us out here, we have recourse to the wisdom and goodness of a Supreme Being, as establishing permanent general laws; the difficulty is, that we have no *data*, from whence to conclude, in the way of reasoning, that these general laws must continue invariably the same without end. It is true, the conclusion is actually made, but it must be referred to some other source. For reasoning will not aid us, more than experience doth, to draw any one conclusion from past to future events. It is certain, at the same time, that the uniformity of nature's operations, is a maxim admitted by all mankind. Though altogether unassisted either by reason or experience, we never have the least hesitation to conclude, that things will be as they have been; in so much that we trust our lives and fortunes upon this conclusion. I shall endeavour to trace out the principle upon which this important conclusion is founded. And this subject will afford, it is hoped, a fresh instance of the admirable correspondence which is discovered betwixt the nature of man and his external circumstances. What is already made out, will lead us directly to our point. If our conviction of the uniformity of nature be not founded upon reason nor experience, it can have no other foundation but sense. The fact truly is, that we are so constituted, as, by a necessary determination of nature, to transfer our past experience to futurity, and to have a direct perception

tion of the constancy and uniformity of nature. Our knowledge here is intuitive, and is more firm and solid than any conclusion from reasoning can be. This perception must belong to an internal sense, because it evidently hath no relation to any of our external senses. And an argument which hath been more than once stated in the foregoing essays, will be found decisive upon this point. Let us suppose a being which hath no perception or notion of the uniformity of nature : such a being will never be able to transfer its past experience to futurity. Every event, however conformable to past experience, will come equally unexpected to this being, as new and rare events do to us ; though possibly without the same surprize.

THIS sense of constancy and uniformity in the works of nature, is not confined to the subject above handled, but displays itself, remarkably, upon many other objects. We have a conviction of a common nature in beings, which are similar in their appearances. We expect a likeness in their constituent parts, in their appetites, and in their conduct. We not only lay our account with uniformity of behaviour in the same individual, but in all the individuals of the same species. This principle hath such influence, as even to make us hope for constancy and uniformity, where experience would lead us to the opposite conclusion. The rich man never thinks  
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of poverty, nor the distressed of relief. Even in this variable climate, we cannot readily bring ourselves to believe, that good or bad weather will have an end. Nay, it governs our notions in law-matters, and is the foundation of the maxim, "That alteration or change of circumstances is not to be presumed." Influenced by the same principle, every man acquires a certain uniformity of manner, which spreads itself upon his thoughts, words, and actions. In our younger years, the effect of this principle is not remarkable, being opposed by a variety of passions, which, as they have different, and sometimes opposite tendencies, occasion a fluctuation in our conduct. But so soon as the heat of youth is over, this principle, acting without counterbalance, seldom fails to bring on a punctual regularity in our way of living, which is extremely remarkable in most old people.

ANALOGY is one of the most common sources of reasoning ; the force of which is universally admitted. The conviction of every argument founded on analogy, ariseth from this very sense of uniformity. Things similar in some particulars, are presumed to be similar in every particular.

IN a word, as the bulk of our views and actions have a future aim, some knowledge of future events is necessary, that we may adapt our

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views

views and actions to natural events. To this end the Author of our nature hath done two things : He hath established a constancy and uniformity in the operations of nature ; and he hath given us an intuitive conviction of this constancy and uniformity, and that things will be as they have been.

**ESSAY**

## ESSAY VI.

### *Of our DREAD of SUPERNATURAL POWERS in the DARK.*

A VERY slight view of human nature, is sufficient to convince us, that we were not dropt here by accident. This earth is fitted for man, and man is fitted for inhabiting this earth. By means of instinctive faculties, we have an intuitive knowledge of the things that surround us, at least of those things by which we may be affected. We can discover objects at a distance. We discern them in their connection of cause and effect; and their future operations are laid open, as well as their present. But in this grand apparatus of instinctive faculties, by which the secrets of nature are disclosed to us, one faculty seems to be withheld; though in appearance the most useful of all: and that is, a faculty to discern what things are noxious, and what are friendly. The most poisonous fruits have sometimes the fairest colours; and the savage animals partake of beauty with the tame and harmless. And when other particulars are inquired into, it will be found, by induction, that man hath no original sense of what is salutary to him, and what is hurtful.

IT is natural to inquire why this instinct is withheld, when it appears to be the design of nature, to furnish us plentifully with instincts for the discovery of useful truths. With regard to this matter, it is too bold an undertaking for man to dive into all the secrets of his maker. We ought to rest contented with the numerous instances we have of good order and good purpose, which must afford us a rational conviction, that good order and good purpose take place universally. At the same time, a rational account may be suggested of this matter. We have a conviction, that there is nothing redundant or superfluous in the operations of nature. Different means are never afforded us to bring about the same end. Experience, so far as it can go, is given us for acquiring knowledge; and instinct only, where experience cannot aid us. Instinct therefore is denied us in the present case, because the knowledge of what is harmful, and what beneficial, may be obtained by experience. Instinct, it is true, is a more compendious way of discovering useful truths. But man being intended an active being, is left to his own industry as much as possible.

MAN then is placed in this world, amidst a great variety of objects, the nature and tendency of which are unknown to him, otherways than by experience. In this situation, he would be in perpetual danger, had he not some faithful monitor

monitor to keep him constantly upon the watch against harm. This monitor is the propensity he hath to be afraid of new objects; such especially as have no peculiar beauty to raise desire. A child, to whom all nature is strange, dreads the approach of every object; and even the face of man is frightful to it. The same timidity and suspicion may be observed in travellers, who converse with strangers, and meet with unknown appearances. Upon the first sight of an herb or fruit, we apprehend the worst, and suspect it to be noxious. An unknown animal is immediately conceived to be dangerous. The more rare phenomena of nature, the causes of which are unknown to the vulgar, never fail to strike them with terror. From this induction, it is clear, that we dread unknown objects: They are always surveyed with an emotion of fear, till experience discover them to be harmless.

THIS dread of unknown objects is supposed to enter into the constitution of all sensible beings, but is most remarkable in the weak and defenceless. The more feeble and delicate the creature is, the more shy and timorous it is observed to be. No creature is, by nature, more feeble and delicate than man; and this principle is to him of admirable use, to keep him constantly upon guard, and to balance the principle of curiosity, which is prevalent in man above all



other creatures, and which, indulged without control, would often betray him into fatal accidents.

THE dread of unknown objects is apt to fire the imagination, so as to magnify their supposed evil qualities and tendencies. For it is a well-known truth, that passion hath a wonderful effect upon the imagination. The less we know of a new object, the greater liberty we take to dress it up in frightful colours. The object is forthwith conceived to have all those dreadful qualities which are suggested by the imagination; and the same terror is raised, as if those qualities were real, and not imaginary\*.

AGAIN, where the new and unknown objects have any thing dreadful in appearance, this circumstance, joined with our natural propensity to dread unknown objects, will raise terror even in the most resolute. If the evils dreaded from such objects be known neither in quality nor degree, the imagination, being under no restraint, figures the greatest evils, both in kind and magnitude, that can be conceived. Where no immediate harm ensues, the mind, by the impulse it hath received, transports itself into futurity, and imagines the strange forms to be prefaces of direful calamities. Hence it is, that the uncommon phænomena of nature, such as

\* See essay upon belief.

comets,

comets, eclipses, earthquakes, and the like, are, by the vulgar, held as forerunners of uncommon events. Grand objects make a deep impression upon the mind, and give force to that passion which occupies it at the time. The above appearances being uncommon, if not altogether new, dispose the mind to terror; which, aided by the emotion arising from the grandeur of the objects, produceth great agitation, and a violent apprehension of danger.

THE strongest and most familiar instance of our natural propensity to dread unknown objects, is the fear that seizes many young persons in the dark; a phenomenon that has not been accounted for with any degree of satisfaction. Light disposeth the mind to cheerfulness and courage. Darkness, on the contrary, depresses the mind, and disposeth it to fear. Any object alarms the mind, when it is already prepared by darkness to receive impressions of fear. The object, which, in the dark, is seen but obscurely, leaves the heated imagination at full liberty, to bestow upon it the most dreadful appearance. This phantom of the imagination, conceived as a reality, unhinges the mind, and throws it into a fit of distraction. The imagination, now heated to the highest degree, multiplies the dreadful appearances to the utmost bounds of its conception. The object becomes a spectre, a devil, a hobgoblin,

hobgoblin, something more terrible than ever was seen or described.

A VERY few accidents of this kind, having so powerful an effect, are sufficient to introduce an association between darkness and malignant powers. And when once this association is formed, there is no occasion for the appearance of an object to create terror. Frightful ideas crowd into the mind, and augment the fear which is occasioned by darkness. The imagination becomes ungovernable, and converts these ideas into real appearances.

THAT the terror occasioned by darkness, is entirely owing to the operations of the imagination, will be evident from a single reflection, that in company no such effect is produced. A companion can afford no security against supernatural powers. But a companion hath the same effect with sunshine, to cheer the mind, and preserve it from gloominess and despondency. The imagination is thereby kept within bounds, and under due subjection to sense and reason.

**ESSAY**

## E S S A Y VII.

### *Of our KNOWLEDGE of the DEITY.*

**T**HE arguments *a priori* for the existence and attributes of the Deity, are urged, with the greatest shew of reason, in the sermons preached at Boyle's lectures. But the sermons upon this subject, though they command my strictest attention, never have gained my heart: on the contrary, they always give me a sensible uneasiness; the cause of which I have been at a loss to discover, though I imagine I can now explain it. Such deep metaphysical reasoning, if it afford any conviction, is surely not adapted to the vulgar and illiterate. Is the knowledge of God, then, reserved for persons of great study and deep thinking? Is a veil thrown over the eyes of the rest of mankind? This thought always returned upon me, and gave me pain. If there really exist a Being, who made, and who governs the world; and if it be his purpose to display himself to his rational creatures; it is not consistent with any idea we can form of the power and wisdom of this Being, that his purpose should be defeated; which plainly is the case, in a great measure, if he can only be discovered, and but obscurely, by a very small part of mankind. At the same time, to found our  
knowledge

knowledge of the Deity upon reasoning solely, is not agreeable to the analogy of nature. We are not left to gather our duty by abstract reasoning, nor indeed by any reasoning. It is engraved upon the table of our hearts. We adapt our actions to the course of nature, by mere instinct, without reasoning, or even experience. Therefore, if we can trust to analogy, we ought to expect, that God will discover himself to us, in some such manner as may take in all mankind, the vulgar and illiterate, as well as the deep-thinking philosopher.

IF these abstruse arguments, however, be relished by the learned and speculative, it is so far well. I cannot help acknowledging, that they afford me no conviction; at least no solid and permanent conviction. We know little about the nature of things, but what we learn from a strict attention to our own nature. That nothing can begin to exist without a cause, is sufficiently evident from sense\*. But that this can be demonstrated by any argument *a priori*, drawn from the nature of things, I have not observed †. And if demonstration fail us in the very outset, we cannot hope for its assistance in the after steps. If any one being can begin to exist without a cause, every being may; upon which supposi-

\* See the essay of our idea of power, towards the close.

† See the same essay, at the beginning.

tion,

tion, we never can hope for a demonstration, that any one being must be eternal. But if this difficulty shall be surmounted, we have another to struggle with. Admitting that something has existed from all eternity, I find no *data* to determine *a priori*, whether this world have existed of itself from all eternity, in a constant succession of causes and effects; or whether it be an effect produced by an almighty power. It is indeed hard to conceive a world, eternal and self-existent, where all things are carried on by blind fate, without design or intelligence. And yet I can find no demonstration to the contrary. If we can form any obscure notion of one intelligent being, existing from all eternity, it appears not more difficult to form a notion of a succession of beings, with or without intelligence; or a notion of a perpetual succession of causes and effects.

IN short, difficulties press both ways. But these difficulties, when examined, arise not from any inconsistency in our ideas. They are occasioned by the limited capacity merely of the mind of man. We cannot comprehend an eternity of existence. It is an object too bulky. It eludes our grasp. The mind is like the eye. It cannot take in an object that is very great or very little. This plainly is the source of our difficulties, when we attempt speculations so remote from common apprehension. Abstract reasoning

soning upon such a subject, must lead into endless perplexities. It is indeed less difficult to conceive one eternal unchangeable Being who made the world, than to conceive a blind chain of causes and effects. At least, we are disposed to the former, as being more agreeable to the imagination. But as we cannot find any inconsistency in the latter supposition, we cannot justly say that it is demonstrably false.

GIVE me leave to add, that to bring out such abstruse and intricate speculations into any clear light, is, at any rate, scarce to be expected. And if, after the utmost straining, they remain obscure and unaffecting, it is evident to me, that they must have a bad tendency. Persons of a peevish and gloomy cast of mind, finding no conviction from that quarter, will be fortified in their propension to believe, that all things happen by blind chance; that there is no wisdom, order, nor harmony, in the government of this world; and consequently, that there is no God.

BEING, therefore, little solicitous about arguments *a priori* for the existence of a Deity, which are not proportioned to the capacity of man, I apply myself with zeal and cheerfulness, to search for the Deity in his works; for by these we must discover him, if he have thought proper to make himself known. And the better to manage the inquiry, I shall endeavour to make  
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out three propositions ; *1<sup>st</sup>*, That if there exist a being, who is the maker and governor of the world, it seems to be a necessary part of his government, that he should make himself known to his intelligent creatures. *2<sup>dly</sup>*, That in fact he hath done so. And, *3<sup>dly</sup>*, That to compass this end, a method is employed entirely suited to the nature of man, and the same by which many other truths of the greatest importance are laid open to him.

THERE certainly cannot be a more discouraging thought to man, than that the world was formed by a fortuitous concourse of atoms, and that all things are carried on by blind impulse. Upon that supposition, he can have no security for his life ; nor for his continuing to be a moral agent, and an intelligent creature, even for a moment. Things have been carried on with regularity and order : but chance may, in an instant, throw all things into the most horrid and dismal confusion. We can have no solid comfort in virtue, when it is a work of mere chance ; nor can we justify our reliance upon the faith of others, when the nature of man rests upon so precarious a foundation. Every thing must appear gloomy, dismal, and disjointed, without a Deity to unite this world of beings into one beautiful and harmonious system. These considerations, and many more that will occur upon the first reflection, afford a very strong conviction,

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viction, if there be a wise and good Being, who superintends the affairs of this world, that he will not conceal himself from his rational creatures. Can any thing be more desirable, or more substantially useful, than to know, that there is a Being from whom no secrets are hid, to whom our good works are acceptable, and even the good purposes of our hearts; and whose government, directed by wisdom and benevolence, ought to make us rest secure, that nothing doth or will fall out but according to good order? This sentiment, rooted in the mind, is an antidote to all misfortune. Without it, life is at best but a confused and gloomy scene.

AND this leads to a different consideration, which makes our knowledge of a benevolent Deity of the greatest importance to us. Though natural and moral evil are far from prevailing in this world, yet so much of both is scattered over the face of things, as to create some degree of doubt, whether there may not be a mixture of chance, or of ill-will, in the government of this world. But once supposing the superintendency of a good being, these evils are no longer considered as such. A man restrains himself from unlawful pleasures, though the restraint gives him pain. But then he does not consider this pain as an evil to repine at. He submits to it voluntarily and with satisfaction, as one doth  
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to grief for the loss of a friend; being conscious that it is *right* and *fit* for him to be so affected. In the same manner, he submits to all the evils of this life. Having confidence in the good government of the Deity, he is persuaded that every thing happens for the best, and therefore that it is his duty to submit to whatever happens. This unfolds a scene so enlivening, and so productive of cheerfulness and good humour, that we cannot readily think, if there be a benevolent Deity, that he will withhold from his creatures so invaluable a blessing.

MAN, at the same time, by his taste for beauty, regularity, and order, is fitted for contemplating the wisdom and goodness displayed in the frame and government of this world. These are proper objects of admiration and joy. It is not agreeable to the ordinary course of nature, that man should be endued with an affection, without having a proper object to bestow it upon. And as the providence of the Deity is the highest object of this affection, it would be unnatural, that man should be kept in ignorance of it.

THESE, I admit, are but probable reasons for believing, that if there exist a benevolent Deity, it must be his intention to manifest himself to his creatures: but they carry a very high degree of probability, which leaves little room for

doubt. At the same time, though it should be our fate to search in vain for this object of our affection, we ought not however to despair, and in that despair to conclude there is no God. Let us but reflect, that he hath not manifested himself to all his creatures. The brutes apparently know nothing of him. And should we be disappointed in this search, the worst we can conclude is, that, for good and wise purposes, which we cannot dive into, he hath thought proper to with-hold himself also from us. We certainly have no reason to convert our ignorance into an argument against his existence. Our ignorance brings us only a step lower, and puts us, so far, upon a footing with the brute creation.

THE second and important branch of our disquisition is, to ascertain this fact, that there is a Deity, and that he hath manifested himself to us. I request only attention of my reader, and not any unreasonable concession. In a former essay \*, two propositions are made out. The first is, That every thing which hath a beginning, is perceived as a *production* or *effect*, which necessarily involves the idea of a *cause*. The second, That we necessarily transfer to the cause, whatever of contrivance or design is discovered in the effect. Considering a house, garden, pic-

\* Of our idea of power.

ture,

ture, or statue, in itself, it is perceived as beautiful. If we attend to these objects in a different view, as things having a beginning, we perceive them to be effects, involving the idea of a cause. If, again, we consider them as artfully contrived to answer certain purposes, we perceive them to be the workmanship of some person of skill. Nor are we deceived in these perceptions. Upon examination, we find, that they correspond to truth and reality.

BUT not only are those objects perceived as effects, which we afterwards learn, from experience, to be the production of man. Natural objects, such as plants and animals, as well as all other objects which once were not, are also perceived as effects, or as the production of some cause. The question will always recur, How came it here? Who made it? What is the cause of its existence?

WE are so accustomed to human arts, that every work of design and use will be attributed to man. But what if it exceed his known powers and faculties? This supposition doth not alter the nature of our perceptions; but only leads us to a different cause; and, in place of man, to determine upon some superior power. If the object be considered as an effect, it necessarily involves the idea of a cause; and the cause cannot be man, if the object of our perception

ception be an effect far surpassing the power of man. This train of thinking leads us directly to our point. Attend but to the anatomy of the meanest plant: so much of art and of curious mechanism is discovered in it, that it must be the production of some cause, far surpassing the power and intelligence of man. The scene opens more and more, when, passing from plants to animals, we come to man the most wonderful of all the works of nature. And when, at last, we take in, at one view, the material and mental world; full of harmony, order, and beauty; happily adjusted in all its parts to answer great and glorious purposes; there is, in this grand production, necessarily involved the perception of a cause, unbounded in power, intelligence, and goodness.

Thus it is that the Deity hath manifested himself to us, by the means of principles wrought into our nature, which must infallibly operate, upon viewing objects in their relation of cause and effect. We discover external objects by their qualities of colour, figure, size, and motion. In the perception of these qualities, connected after a certain manner, is comprehended the perception of the substance or thing to which these qualities belong. At the same time, we perceive this substance or thing, supposing it to have a beginning of existence, to be an effect produced by some cause. And we perceive the  
powers

powers and properties of this cause from its effects. If there be an aptitude in the effect to some end, we attribute to the cause, intelligence and design. If the effect produced be something that is good in itself, or that hath a tendency to some good end or purpose, we attribute goodness to the cause, as well as intelligence and design. And this we do, not by any process of reasoning, but by sense and perception. The Deity hath not left his existence to be gathered from slippery and far-fetched arguments. We need but open our eyes, to receive impressions of him almost from every thing we perceive. We discover his being and attributes in the same manner that we discover external objects. We have the evidence of our senses; and none but those who are so stubbornly hypothetical, as to deny the existence of matter, against the evidence of their senses, can seriously and deliberately deny the existence of the Deity. In fine, there is a wonderful harmony established betwixt our perceptions and the course of nature. We rely on our perceptions, for the existence of external objects, and their past, present, and future operations. We rely on these perceptions by the necessity of our nature; and, upon experience, find ourselves not deceived. Our perception of the Deity is as distinct and authoritative, as that of external objects. And though here we cannot have experience to appeal to, the want of experience can never afford an argument

argument against the authority of any perception, where, from the nature of the thing, there can be no experience. It is sufficient for conviction, that our perceptions in general correspond to the truth of things, where-ever there is an opportunity to try them by experience; and therefore we can have no cause to doubt of our perceptions in any case where they are not contradicted by experience.

So far the Deity is discoverable, by every person who goes but one step beyond the surface of things, and their mere existence. We may indeed behold the earth in its gayest dress, the heavens in all their glory, without having any perception other than that of beauty, something in these objects that pleases and delights us. Many pass their lives, brutishly involved in the gross pleasures of sense, without having any perception, at least any strong or permanent perception of the Deity: and possibly this, in general, is the case of savages, before they are humanized by society and government. But the Deity cannot be long hid from those who are accustomed to any degree of reflection. No sooner are we prepared to relish beauties of the second and third class \*; no sooner do we acquire a taste for regularity, or-

\* See the essay upon the foundation and principles of the law of nature.

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der, design, and good purpose, than we begin to perceive the Deity in the beauty of the operations of nature. Savages, who have no consistent rule of conduct, who act by the blind impulse of passion and appetite, and who have only a glimmering of the moral sense, are but ill qualified to discover the Deity in his works. If they have little or no perception of a just tenor of life, of the dignity of behaviour, and of the beauty of action, how should they perceive the beauty of the works of creation, and the admirable harmony of all the parts, in the great system of things? Being conscious of nothing but disorder and sensual impulse within, they cannot be conscious of any thing better without them. Society teaches mankind self-denial, and improves the moral sense. Disciplined in society, the taste for order and regularity unfolds itself by degrees. The social affections gain the ascendant, and the morality of actions gets firm possession of the mind. In this improved state, the beauty of the creation makes a strong impression; and we can never cease admiring the excellency of that cause, who is the author of so many beautiful effects. And thus, to society, we owe all the blessings of life; and particularly, the knowledge of the Deity, the most valuable branch of human knowledge.

HITHERTO we have gone no farther, than to point out the means by which we discover the  
Deity.



Deity, and his attributes of power, wisdom, and goodness. So far are we carried by those wonderful principles in our nature, which discover the connection betwixt cause and effect, and from the effect discover the powers and properties of the cause. But there is one attribute of the Supreme Being, of the most essential kind, which remains to be unfolded. It is what commonly passeth under the name of *self-existence*, that he must have existed for ever; and, consequently, that he cannot be considered as an effect, to require a cause of his existence; but, on the contrary, without being caused, that, mediately or immediately, he is the cause of all other things. A principle we have had occasion more than once to mention, will make this evident; *sciz.* That nothing can begin to exist without a cause. Every thing which comes into existence, and once was not, is, by a necessary determination of our nature, perceived as an effect, or as a production; the very conception of which involves an adequate cause. Now, if every thing have a beginning, one being at least, to wit, that which first came into existence, must be an effect or production without a cause; which is a direct inconsistency. If all beings had a beginning, there was a time when the world was an absolute void; upon which supposition, it is intuitively certain, that nothing could ever have come into existence. This proposition we perceive to be true; and our perception affords us,

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in this case, a more solid conviction than any demonstration can do. One being, therefore, must have existed from all eternity; who, as he is not an effect or production, cannot possibly be indebted for his existence to any other being. At the same time, as we can have no foundation for supposing the existence of more eternal beings than one, this one being must be the Deity; because all other beings, mediately or immediately, owe their existence to him. All other beings, as they are supposed to be produced in time, must have a cause of their existence; and, by the supposition, there can be no other cause but this eternal Being. The bulk of mankind probably, in their notions of the Deity, scarce comprehend this attribute of self-existence. A man must be accustomed a good deal to abstract reasoning, who of himself discovers this truth. But it is not difficult to explain it to others, after it is discovered. And it deserves well to be inculcated; for without it our knowledge of the Deity must be extremely imperfect. His other attributes of power, wisdom, and goodness, are, in some measure, communicated to his creatures; but his attribute of self-existence makes the strongest opposition imaginable betwixt him and his creatures.

A FEW words will suffice upon the third proposition, which, in a good measure, is already explained. The essence of the Deity is far beyond

yond the reach of our comprehension. Were he to exhibit himself to us in broad day-light, it is not a thing supposable, that he could be reached by any of our external senses. The attributes of self-existence, wisdom, goodness, and power, are purely intellectual. And therefore, so far as we can comprehend; there are no ordinary means to acquire any knowledge of the Deity, but by his works. By means, indeed, - of that sense which discovers causes from their effects, he hath manifested himself to us in a satisfactory manner, liable to no doubt nor error. And after all, what further evidence can we desire, when the evidence we have of his existence is little inferior to that we have of our own existence? Impressions or perceptions serve us for evidence in both cases\*. Our own existence, indeed, is, of all facts, that which concerns us the most; and therefore of our own existence we ought to have the highest certainty. Next to it, we have not, as it appears to me, a greater certainty of any matter of fact, than of the existence of the Deity. It is, at least, equal to the certainty we have of external objects, and of the constancy and uniformity of the operations of nature, upon the faith of which our whole schemes of life are adjusted.

THE arguments *a posteriori* which have been

\* See the essay upon the idea of self, and personal identity.

urged

urged for the being and attributes of the Deity, are generally defective. There is always wanting one link of the chain, to wit, that peculiar principle upon which is founded our knowledge of causes and their effects. But the calm perceptions, turning habitual by frequent repetition, are apt to be overlooked in our reasonings. Many a proposition is rendered obscure, by much laboured argument, for the truth of which we need but appeal to our own perceptions. Thus we are told, that the frame and order of the world, the wisdom and goodness displayed in every part of it, are an evident demonstration of the being of a God. These things, I acknowledge, afford us full conviction of his being. But, laying aside sense and perception, I should be utterly at a loss, by any sort of reasoning, to conclude the existence of any one thing from that of any other thing. In particular, by what process of reasoning can we demonstrate this conclusion to be true, That order and beauty must needs proceed from a designing cause? It is true, the idea of an effect involves the idea of a cause. But how does reason make out, that the thing we name an *effect*, may not exist of itself, as well as what we name a *cause*? If it be urged, that human works, where means are apparently adjusted to an end, and beauty and order discovered, are always known to be the effects of intelligence and design: I admit this to be true, so far as I have experience. But

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where experience fails me, I desire to know, by what step, what link in the chain of reasoning, am I to connect my past experience with this inference, that in every case I ought to form the same conclusion. If it be said, that nature prompts us to judge of similar instances, by former experience; this is giving up reason and demonstration, to appeal to that very sense on which I contend the evidence of this truth must entirely rest. All the arguments *a posteriori* may be resolved into this principle; which, no doubt, had its due influence upon the writers who handle the present subject; though, I must be allowed to say, it hath not been explained, nor, perhaps, sufficiently understood by them; whereby all of them have been led into the error of stating, as demonstrative reasoning, what is truly an appeal to our senses. They reason, for example, upon the equality of males and females, and hold the infinite odds against this equality, to be a demonstration, that matters cannot be carried on by chance. This, considered merely as reasoning, does not conclude; for, besides that chance is infinite in its varieties, there may be some blind fatality, some unknown cause, in the nature of things, which produceth this uniformity. But though reason cannot afford demonstration in this case, sense and perception afford conviction. The equality of males and females, is one of the many instances which we know and perceive to be effects

fects of a designing cause ; and of which we can no more entertain a doubt, than of our own existence. The same principle which unfolds to us the connection of causes and their effects in the most common events, discovers this whole universe to stand in the relation of an effect to a supreme cause.

To substitute perception in place of reason and demonstration, may seem to put the evidence of the Deity upon too low a footing. But this is a mistake ; for the effect is directly opposite. Intuition affords a higher degree of conviction than any reasoning possibly can do. And after all, human reason ought not to be so much vaunted of as is commonly done by philosophers. It affords very little aid in making original discoveries. The comparing things together, and directing our inferences from sense and experience, are its proper province. In this way reason gives its aid, in our inquiries concerning the Deity. It enlarges our views of final causes, and of the prevalence of wisdom and goodness. But the application of the argument from final causes, to prove the existence of a Deity, and the force of our conclusion from beautiful and orderly effects to a designing cause, are not from reason, but from an internal light, which shows things in their relation of cause and effect. These conclusions rest entirely upon sense and perception ; and it is surprising, that writers should o-

verlook what is so natural, and so obvious. But the pride of man's heart makes him desire to extend his discoveries by dint of reasoning. For reasoning is our own work. There is merit in acuteness and penetration; and we are better pleased to assume merit to ourselves, than humbly to acknowledge, that, to the most important discoveries, we are directly led by the hand of the Almighty\*.

HAVING unfolded that principle upon which I would rest the most important of all truths, objections must not be overlooked, such as appear to have weight: and I shall endeavour to give these objections their utmost weight; which ought to be done in every dispute, and which becomes more strictly a duty, in handling a subject where truth is of the utmost importance.

CONSIDERING the foregoing argument on all

\* To prevent mistakes, it is proper to be observed, that, in a lax sense, reason comprehends intuition, as well as the power of drawing conclusions from premisses. But here it is used in its strict and proper sense, as opposed to intuition. By intuition we perceive certain propositions to be true, precisely as by sight we perceive certain things to exist. Other propositions require a chain of comparisons, and several intermediate steps, before we arrive at the conclusion; by which we perceive, either demonstrably or probably, the proposition to be true. Hence it is clear, that intuitive knowledge, which is acquired by a single act of perception, must stand higher in the scale of conviction, than any reasoning can do which requires a plurality of perceptions. The more complex any process is by which we acquire knowledge, the greater is the chance of error; and consequently the less entire our conviction.

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sides, I do not find, that it can be more advantageously combated, than by opposing to it, the eternity and self-existence of the world, governed by chance or blind fatality. It is above admitted to be very difficult, by any abstract reasoning, to prove the inconsistency of this supposition. But we have an intuitive perception of the inconsistency; for the frame and conduct of this world contain in them too much of wisdom, art, and foresight, to admit of the supposition of chance or blind fatality. We are necessarily determined, by a principle in our nature, to attribute such effects to some intelligent and designing cause. Supposing this cause to be the world itself, we have, at least, got free from the supposition of chance and blind fatality. And if the world be a being endued with unbounded power, intelligence, and benevolence, the world is the being we are in quest of; for we have no other idea of the Deity, but of an eternal and self-existent being, endued with power, wisdom, and goodness. But the hypothesis, thus reformed, still contradicts our perceptions. The world is made up of parts, separable, and actually separated. The attributes of unbounded power, intelligence, and benevolence, do certainly not belong to this earth; and as little to the sun, moon, or stars; which are not conceived to be even voluntary agents. Therefore these attributes must belong to a Being, who made the



earth, sun, moon, and stars, and who connects the whole together in one system.

A SECOND objection may be, That the foregoing reasoning, by which we conclude the eternity and self-existence of one Being, who made this world, doth not necessarily infer such a conclusion, but only an eternal succession of such beings ; which may be reckoned a more natural supposition, than the idea of one eternal self-existent Being, without any cause of his existence.

IN matters so profound, it is difficult to form notions with any degree of accuracy. I have observed above, that it is too much for man, to grasp, in his thought, an eternal Being, whose existence, upon that account, cannot admit of the supposition of a cause. To talk, as some of our metaphysical writers do, of an absolute necessity in the nature of the Being, as the cause of his existence, is mere jargon. For we can conceive nothing more clearly, than that the cause must go before the effect, and that the cause cannot possibly be in the effect. But however difficult it may be to conceive one eternal Being, without a cause of its existence ; it is not less difficult to conceive an eternal succession of beings, deriving their existence from each other. For though every link be supposed a production, the chain itself exists without a cause, as well as one eternal Being does. Therefore

fore an eternal succession of beings is not a more natural supposition, than one eternal self-existent Being. And taking it in a different light, it will appear a supposition much less natural, or rather altogether unnatural. Succession in existence, implying the successive annihilation of individuals, is indeed a very natural conception. But then it is intimately connected with frail and dependent beings, and cannot, without the utmost violence to the conception, be applied to the Maker of all things, to whom we naturally ascribe perpetual existence, and every other perfection. And therefore, as this hypothesis of a perpetual succession, when applied to the Deity, is destitute of any support from reason or experience, and is contradicted by every one of our natural perceptions, there can be no ground for adopting it.

THE noted remark, That *primos in orbe deos fecit timor*, may be objected; as it will be thought unphilosophical, to multiply causes for our belief of a Deity, when fear alone must have that effect. For my part, I have little doubt of the truth of the remark, taking it in its proper sense, that fear is the foundation of our belief of invisible malevolent powers. For it is evident, that fear can never be the cause of our belief of a benevolent Deity. I have unfolded, in another essay \*, the cause of our dread of malevo-

\* Of our dread of supernatural powers in the dark.

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lent invisible powers. And I am persuaded, that nothing has been more hurtful to religion, than an irregular propensity in our nature to dread such powers. Superficial thinkers are apt to confound these phantoms of the imagination, with the objects of our true and genuine perceptions: and finding so little reality in the former, they are apt to conclude the latter also to be a fiction. But if they gave any sort of deliberate attention, they would soon learn, by the assistance of history, as well as by original perception, to distinguish these objects, as having no real connection with each other. Man, in his original savage state, is a shy and timorous animal, dreading every new object, and attributing every extraordinary event to some invisible malevolent power. Led, at the same time, by mere appetite, he hath little idea of regularity and order, of the morality of actions, or of the beauty of nature. In this state he naturally multiplies his invisible malevolent powers, without entertaining any notion of a supreme Being, the Creator of all things. As man ripens in society, and is benefited by the good-will of others, his dread of new objects gradually lessens. He begins to perceive regularity and order in the course of nature. He becomes sharp-sighted, in discovering causes from effects, and effects from causes. He ascends gradually, through the different orders of beings, and their operations, till he discovers the Deity, who is the cause of all things. When  
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we run over the history of man, it will be found to hold true in fact, that savages, who are the most possessed with the opinion of evil spirits, are, of all people, the most deficient in the knowledge of a Deity; and that as all civilized nations, without exception, entertain the firm belief of a Deity, so the dread of evil spirits wears out in every nation, in proportion to their gradual advances in social intercourse\*.

AND

\* With respect to the deification of heroes, which was the practice in the first stages of society, it is a common opinion, that, in the eagerness of a too forward gratitude to those who had in any degree contributed to the better accommodation of life, their countrymen no sooner saw them removed by death from the society of men, than they exalted them to that of the gods. I cannot for my part relish this conjecture. The notions of immortality among savages are generally obscure; and when a man is cut off by a natural or violent death, he is not, among barbarians, conceived to be still alive, far less to be translated into a higher order of beings. It is true, that among savages, where every new invention makes a shining figure, a man who contributes in any measure to the accommodation of society, is honoured during his life, and remembered after his death; and to honour the memory of such men, feasts and ceremonies have been instituted. It is not reasonable to believe, that at first the matter was carried any further. That, among savages, the first notions of supernatural powers arose from fear, is extremely probable. In the gradual improvement of society, regularity, order, and good design, came in some obscure manner to be recognized in the affairs of this world; and this naturally suggested the superintendence of benevolent powers, perhaps of the sun or moon, those exalted and illustrious beings. This apparently was the first dawn of internal conviction with respect to the Deity. So far is certain, that Polytheism was first recognized before the unity of the Deity was discovered by our more enlightened faculties. In this first stage of religion, superior beings, according to the notions entertained of them, were much limited in power, as well as in benevolence. Men could not strain their thoughts to conceive much more power or benevolence than existed in their

AND this leads to a reflection, which cannot fail to have universal influence. Man, in a savage and brutish state, is hurried away by every gust of passion, and by every phantom of the imagination. His powers and faculties are improved by education, and good culture. He acquires deep knowledge in the nature of things, and learns accurately to distinguish truth from falsehood. What more satisfying evidence can we require of the truth of our perceptions of the Deity, than to find these perceptions prevalent, in proportion as mankind improve in the arts of life? These perceptions go hand in hand with the rational powers. As man increaseth in knowledge, and in the discerning faculties, his perceptions of the Deity become proportionally more strong, clear, and authoritative. The universal conviction of a Deity, which hath, without exception, spread through all civilized nations, cannot possibly be without a foundation in our nature. To insist that it may, is to insist,

their own species. Such confined and groveling notions favoured the system of Polytheism: for we are apt to supply by numbers what is wanting in energy; and as fear had multiplied the number of malevolent powers, hope was not less fruitful with respect to those who were supposed benevolent. Then it was, and no sooner, that good men, held in remembrance by solemn institutions, were, in the fond imagination of their countrymen, advanced a step higher, and converted into genii, or tutelary deities. They were still supposed to superintend the affairs of mankind, and, in their exalted state, to continue that good-will to their country which was so remarkable during their existence in the human shape. These appear to be the natural gradations of the mind in its progress towards the Deity.

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that an effect may be without an adequate cause. Reason cannot be an adequate cause ; because our reasonings upon this subject, must, at best, be abstruse, and beyond the comprehension of the bulk of mankind. Our knowledge, therefore, of the Deity, must be founded on intuition and perception, which are common to mankind. And it is agreeable to the analogy of nature, that God should discover himself to his rational creatures after this manner. If this subject be involved in any degree of obscurity, writers are to blame, who, in a matter of so great importance, ought to give no quarter to inaccuracy of thought or expression. But it is an error common in the bulk of writers, to substitute reason in place of intuitive perception. The faculty of perception, working silently, and without effort, is generally overlooked : and we must find a reason for every thing we judge to be true ; though the truth of the proposition often depends, not upon reasoning, but merely upon perception. It is thus that morality has been involved in some obscurity, by metaphysical writers ; and it is equally to be regretted, that, by the same sort of writers, the knowledge of the Deity hath also been involved in some obscurity.

HAVING settled the belief of a Deity upon its proper basis, we shall proceed to take a general view of the attributes which belong to that great Being. And, first,

*of*

*Of the UNITY of the DEITY.*

WITH regard to this, and all the other attributes of the Deity, it ought to be no discouraging reflection, that we cannot attain an adequate idea of them. The Deity is too grand an object to be comprehended, in any perfect manner, by the human mind. We have not words nor ideas which any way correspond to the manner of his existence. Should some good angel undertake to be our instructor, we would still be at a loss to form a distinct conception of it. Power, intelligence, and goodness, are attributes which we can comprehend. But with regard to the nature of the Deity in general, and the manner of his existence, we must be satisfied, in this mortal state, to remain much in the dark. The attribute of *Unity*, is what, of all, we have the least certainty about, by the light of nature. It is not inconsistent, that there should be two or more beings of the very highest order, whose essence and actions may be so regulated by the nature of the beings themselves, as to be altogether concordant and harmonious. In truth, the nature of the Divine Being is so far out of our reach, that we must be absolutely at a loss to apply to it *unity* or *multiplicity*. This property applies to numbers, and to individual things; but we know not that it will apply to the Deity. At the same time, if we may venture

ture to judge of a matter so remote from common apprehension, we ought to conclude in favour of the attribute of *unity*. We perceive the necessity of one eternal being; and it is sufficient, that there is not the smallest foundation from sense or reason, to suppose more than one.

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of



*Of the POWER and INTELLIGENCE of  
the DEITY.*

**T**HESSE two attributes I join together, because the same reflection will apply to both. The wisdom and power which must necessarily be supposed in the creation and government of this world, are so far beyond the reach of our comprehension, that they may justly be styled *infinite*. We can ascribe no bounds to either: and we have no other notion of *infinite*, but that to which we can ascribe no bounds.

*of*

*Of the BENEVOLENCE of the DEITY.*

THE mixed nature of the events which fall under our observation, seems, at first sight, to point out a mixed cause, partly good and partly ill. The author of *Philosophical essays concerning human understanding*, in his eleventh essay, *Of the practical consequences of natural religion*, puts in the mouth of an Epicurean philosopher a very shrewd argument against the benevolence of the Deity. The sum of it is what follows. “ If the cause be known  
 “ only by the effect, we never ought to assign  
 “ to it any qualities, beyond what are precisely  
 “ requisite to produce the effect. Allowing,  
 “ therefore, God to be the author of the existence and order of the universe ; it follows,  
 “ that he possesses that precise degree of power,  
 “ intelligence, and benevolence, which appears  
 “ in his workmanship.” And hence, from the present scene of things, apparently so full of ill and disorder, it is concluded, “ That we have  
 “ no foundation for ascribing any attribute to  
 “ the Deity, but what is precisely commensurate with the imperfection of this world.” With regard to mankind, he reasons differently. “ In works of human art and contrivance, it is  
 “ admitted, that we can advance from the effect  
 “ to the cause, and returning back from the  
 “ cause, that we conclude new effects, which

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“ have

“ have not yet existed. Thus, for instance,  
 “ from the sight of a half-finished building, sur-  
 “ rounded with heaps of stones and mortar,  
 “ and all the instruments of masonry, we natu-  
 “ rally conclude, that the building will be fi-  
 “ nished, and receive all the farther improve-  
 “ ments which art can bestow upon it. But the  
 “ foundation of this reasoning is plainly, that  
 “ man is a being whom we know by experience,  
 “ and whose motives and designs we are ac-  
 “ quainted with, which enables us to draw ma-  
 “ ny inferences, concerning what may be ex-  
 “ pected from him. But did we know man on-  
 “ ly from the single work or production which  
 “ we examine, we could not argue in this  
 “ manner; because our knowledge of all the  
 “ qualities which we ascribe to him, being, up-  
 “ on that supposition, derived from the work or  
 “ production, it is impossible they could point  
 “ any thing farther, or be the foundation of any  
 “ new inference.”

SUPPOSING reason to be our only guide in  
 these matters, which is supposed by this philo-  
 sopher in his argument, I cannot help seeing his  
 reasoning to be just. It appears to be true, that  
 by no inference of reason can I conclude any  
 power or benevolence in the cause, beyond what  
 is displayed in the effect. But this is no won-  
 derful discovery. The philosopher might have  
 carried his argument a greater length. He might  
 have

have observed, even with regard to a man I am perfectly acquainted with, that I cannot conclude, by any chain of reasoning, he will finish the house he has begun. It is to no purpose to urge his temper and disposition. For from what principle of reason can I infer, that these will continue the same as formerly? He might further have observed, that the difficulty is greater, with regard to a man I know nothing of, supposing him to have begun the building. For what foundation have I to transfer the qualities of the persons I am acquainted with to strangers? This surely is not performed by any process of reasoning. There is still a wider step; which is, that reason will not support me, in attributing to the Deity even that precise degree of power, intelligence, and benevolence, which appears in his workmanship. I find no inconsistency in supposing, that a blind and undesigned cause may be productive of excellent effects. It will, I presume, be difficult to produce a demonstration to the contrary. And supposing, at the instant of operation, the Deity to have been endued with these properties, can we make out, by any argument *a priori*, that they are still subsisting in him? Nay, this same philosopher might have gone a great way further, by observing, when any thing comes into existence, that, by no process of reasoning, can we so much as infer any cause of its existence.

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BUT happily for man, where reason fails him, sense and intuition come to his assistance. By means of principles implanted in our nature, we are enabled to make the foregoing conclusions and inferences; as at full length is made out in some of the foregoing essays. More particularly, power discovered in any object, is intuitively perceived to be a permanent quality, like figure or extension\*. Upon this account, power discovered by a single effect, is considered as sufficient to produce the like effects, without end. Further, great power may be discovered from a small effect; which holds even in bodily strength; as where an action is performed readily, and without effort. This is equally remarkable in wisdom and intelligence. A very short argument may unfold correctness of judgment, and a deep reach. The same holds in art and skill. Examining a slight piece of workmanship done with taste, we readily observe, that the artist was equal to a greater task. But it is most of all remarkable in the quality of benevolence. For even from a single effect, produced by an unknown cause, which appears to be accurately adapted to some good purpose, we necessarily attribute to this cause benevolence, as well as power and wisdom †. The perception is indeed but weak, when it arises from a single effect:

\* Essay upon our knowledge of future events.

† Essay of our idea of power, at the close.

but

but still it is a clear and distinct perception of pure benevolence, without any mixture of malice ; for such contradictory qualities are not readily ascribed to the same cause. There may be a difficulty indeed, where the effect is of a mixed nature, partly ill, partly good ; or where a variety of effects, having these opposite characters, proceed from the same cause. Such intricate cases cannot fail to imbarrafs us. But as we must form some sentiment, the resolution of the difficulty plainly is, that we must ascribe benevolence or malevolence to the cause, from the prevalence of the one or other quality in the effects. If evil make the greater figure, we perceive the cause to be malevolent, notwithstanding opposite instances of goodness. If, upon the whole, goodness be supereminent, we perceive the cause to be benevolent ; and are not moved by the cross instances of evil, which we endeavour to reconcile as we can with pure benevolence. It is indeed true, that where the opposite effects nearly balance each other, our perception cannot be entire upon either side. But if good or evil greatly preponderate, the weight in the opposite scale goes for nothing : the perception is entire upon one side or other. For it is the tendency of our perceptions, to reject a mixed character made up of benevolence and malevolence, unless where it is necessarily pressed home upon us, by an equality of opposite effects,

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SUCH are the conclusions that we can with certainty draw ; not indeed from reason, but from intuitive perception. So little are we acquainted with the essence and nature of things, that we cannot establish these conclusions upon any argument *a priori*. Nor would it be of great benefit to mankind, to have these conclusions demonstrated to them ; few having either leisure or genius to deal in such profound speculations. It is more wisely ordered, that they appear to us intuitively certain. We perceive that they are true, and our perceptions have full authority over us. This is a solid foundation for our conviction of the benevolence of the Deity. If, from a single effect, pure benevolence in the cause can be perceived ; what doubt can there be of the pure benevolence of the Deity, when we survey his works, pregnant with good-will to mankind ? Innumerable instances, of things wisely adapted to good purposes, give us the strongest conviction of the goodness, as well as wisdom of the Deity ; which is joined with the firmest persuasion of constancy and uniformity in his operations. A few cross instances, which to us, weak-sighted mortals, may appear of ill tendency, ought not, and cannot make us waver. When we know so little of nature, it would be surprising indeed, if we should be able to account for every event, and its final tendency. Unless we were let into the counsels  
of

of the Almighty, we can never hope to unravel all the mysteries of the creation.

I SHALL add some other considerations, to confirm our belief of the pure benevolence of the Deity. And, in the first place, I venture to lay it down for a truth, that pure malice is a principle not to be found in human nature, far less in the Deity. The benevolence of man is indeed often checked and controlled by jealousy, envy, and other selfish passions. But these are distinct from pure malice, which is not opposite to self-interest, but to pure benevolence. Now, the independent and all-sufficient nature of the Deity, sets him above all suspicion of being liable even to envy, or the pursuit of any interest, other than the general interest of his creatures. Wants, weakness, and opposition of interests, are the causes of ill-will and malice among men. From all such influences the Deity must be exempted. And therefore, unless we suppose him less perfect than the creatures he hath made, we cannot readily suppose, that there is any degree of malice in his nature.

THERE is a second consideration, which hath always afforded me great satisfaction. Did natural evil prevail in reality, as much as it doth in appearance, we must expect, that the enlargement of natural knowledge should daily discover new instances of bad, as well as of good intention.



tention. But the fact is directly otherways. Our discoveries ascertain us more and more of the benevolence of the Deity, by unfolding beautiful final causes without number ; while the appearances of ill intention gradually vanish, like a mist after the sun breaks out. Many things are now found to be curious in their contrivance, and productive of good effects, which formerly appeared useless, or perhaps of ill tendency. And, in the gradual progress of learning, we have the strongest reason to expect, that many more discoveries of the like kind will be made hereafter. This very consideration, had we nothing else to rely on, ought to make us rest with assurance upon the intuitive conviction we have of the benevolence of the Deity ; without giving way to the perplexity of a few cross appearances, which, in matters so far beyond our comprehension, ought rationally to be ascribed to our own ignorance, and, by no means, to any malevolence in the Deity. In the progress of learning, the time may come, we have great reason to hope it will come, when all doubts and perplexities of this kind shall be fully cleared up.

I SHALL satisfy myself with suggesting but one other consideration, That inferring a mixed nature in the Deity, from events which cannot be clearly reconciled to benevolence, is, at best, new-moulding the Manichean system, by substituting,

tuting, in place of it, one really less plausible. For I can, with greater facility, form a conception of two opposite powers governing the universe, than of one power endued with great goodness and great malevolence, which are principles repugnant to each other.

IT thus appears, that our conviction of this attribute of pure benevolence hath a wide and solid foundation. It is impressed upon us by intuitive perception, by every discovery we make in the science of nature, and by every argument which is suggested by reason and reflection. There is but one objection of any weight which can be moved against it, arising from the difficulty of accounting for natural and moral evil. It is observed above, that the objection, however it may puzzle, ought not to shake our faith in this attribute; because an argument from ignorance can never be a convincing argument in any case; and this therefore, in its strongest light, appears but in the shape of a difficulty, not of a solid objection. At the same time, as the utmost labour of thought is well bestowed upon a subject in which mankind is so much interested, I shall proceed to suggest some reflections, which may tend to satisfy us, that the instances commonly given of natural and moral evil, are not so inconsistent with pure benevolence, as at first sight may be imagined.

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ONE preliminary point must be settled, which I presume will be admitted without much hesitation. It certainly will not be thought inconsistent, in any degree, with the pure benevolence of the Deity, that the world is filled with an endless variety of creatures, gradually ascending in the scale of being, from the most groveling to the most glorious. To think that this affords an argument against pure benevolence, is in effect to think, that all inanimate beings ought to be endued with life and motion; and that all animate beings ought to be angels. If, at first view, it shall be thought, that infinite power and goodness cannot stop short of absolute perfection in their operations, and that the work of creation must be confined to the highest order of beings, in the highest perfection; this thought will soon be corrected, by considering, that, by this supposition, a great void is left, which, according to the present system of things, is filled with beings, and with life and motion. And, supposing the world to be replenished with the highest order of beings, created in the highest degree of perfection, it is certainly an act of more extensive benevolence, to complete the work of creation, by the addition of an infinity of creatures less perfect, than to leave a great blank betwixt beings of the highest order and nothing.

THE imperfection, then, of a created being,  
abstractly

abstractly considered, impeaches none of the attributes of the Deity, whether power, wisdom, or benevolence. And if so, neither can pain, abstractly considered, be an impeachment, so far as it is the natural and necessary consequence of imperfection. The government of the world is carried on by general laws, which produce constancy and uniformity in the operations of nature. Among many reasons for this, we can clearly discover one, which is unfolded in a former essay \*, that, were not nature uniform and constant, men, and other sensible beings, would be altogether at a loss how to conduct themselves. Our nature is adjusted to these general laws; and must, therefore, be subjected to all their varieties, whether beneficial or hurtful. We are made sensible beings, and therefore equally capable of pleasure and pain. And it must follow, from the very nature of the thing, that delicacy of perception, which is the source of much pleasure, may be equally the source of much pain. It is true, we cannot pronounce it to be a contradiction, that a being should be susceptible of pleasure only, and not of pain. But no argument can be founded upon this supposition, but what will conclude, that a creature, such as man, ought to have no place in the scale of beings; which surely will not be maintained: for it is still better, that man be as

\* Of our knowledge of future events.

he is, than not be at all. It is further to be observed in general, that aversion to pain is not so great, at least in mankind, as to counterbalance every other appetite. Most men would purchase an additional share of happiness, at the expence of some pain. And therefore it can afford no argument against the benevolence of the Deity, that created beings, from their nature and condition, are capable of pain, supposing, in the main, their life to be comfortable. Their state is still preferable to that of inanimate matter, capable neither of pleasure nor pain.

THUS then it appears, even from a general view of our subject, that natural evil affords no argument against the benevolence of the Deity. And this will appear still in a stronger light, when we go to particulars. It is fully laid open in the first essay, that the social affections, even when most painful, are accompanied with no degree of aversion, whether in the direct feeling, or in the after reflection. We value ourselves the more for being so constituted; being conscious that such a constitution is *right* and *meet* for sociable creatures. Distresses, therefore, of this sort, cannot be called evils, when we have no aversion to them, and do not repine at them. And if these be laid aside, what may be justly termed natural evils, will be reduced within a small compass. They will be found to proceed necessarily, and by an established train of  
of

of causes and effects, either from the imperfection of our nature, or from the operation of general laws. Pain is not distributed through the world blindly, nor with any appearance of malice ; but ends, proportions, and measures, are observed in the distribution. Sensible marks of good tendency are conspicuous, even in the harshest dispensations of Providence, as well as in its general laws : and the good tendency of these general laws, is a sure pledge of benevolence, even in those instances where we may be at a loss about their application. One thing is certain, that there is in man a natural principle to submit to these general laws, and their consequences. And were this principle cultivated as it ought to be, men would have the same consciousness of right conduct, in submitting to the laws of the natural world, that they have in submitting to the laws of the moral world, and would as little repine at the distresses of the one kind, as at those of the other.

BUT justice is not done to the subject, unless we proceed farther, to show, that pain and distress are productive of manifold good ends, and that the present system cannot well be without them. In the first place, pain is necessary, as a monitor of what is hurtful and dangerous to life. Every man is trusted with the care of his own preservation ; and he would be ill qualified for this trust, were he left entirely to the guidance

of reason. He would die for want of food, were it not for the pain of hunger. And, but for the pain arising from fear, he would precipitate himself, every moment, into the most destructive enterprises. In the next place, pain is the great sanction of laws, both human and divine. There would be no order nor discipline in the world without it. In the third place, the distresses and disappointments which arise from the uncertainty of seasons, from the variable tempers of those we are connected with, and from other cross accidents, are wonderfully well adapted to our constitution, by keeping our hopes and fears in perpetual agitation. Man is an active being, and is not in his element, but when in variety of occupation. A constant and uniform tenor of life, without hopes or fears, however agreeable in itself, would soon bring on satiety and disgust. Pain therefore is necessary, not only to enhance our pleasures, but to keep us in perpetual motion\*. And it is needless to observe, a second

\* One argument used to the disadvantage of Providence, I take to be a very strong one in its defence. It is objected, That storms and tempests, unfruitful seasons, serpents, spiders, flies, and other noxious or troublesome animals, with many more instances of the like kind, discover an imperfection in nature, because human life would be much easier without them. But the design of Providence may clearly be perceived in this proceeding. The motions of the sun and moon, in short, the whole system of the universe, as far as philosophers have been able to discover and observe, are in the utmost degree of regularity and perfection; but where-ever God hath left to man the power of interposing a remedy by thought or labour, there he hath placed things

cond time, that, to complain of man's constitution in this respect, is, in other words, to complain, that there is such a creature as man in the scale of being. To mention but one other thing, pain and distress have a wonderful tendency to advance the interests of society. Grief, compassion, and sympathy, are strong connecting principles, by which every individual is made subservient to the general good of the whole species.

I SHALL close this branch of my subject with a general reflection, which is reserved to the last place, because, in my apprehension, it brings the argument for the benevolence of the Deity within a very narrow compass. When we run over what we know of the formation and government of this world, the instances are without number, of good intention, and of consummate wisdom, in adjusting things to good ends and purposes. And it is equally true, that, as we advance in knowledge, scenes of this kind multiply upon us. This observation is enforced above. But I must now observe, that there is not a single instance to be met with, which can be justly ascribed to malevolence or bad intention. Many evils may be pointed out; evils at least as to us. But when the most is made of

things in a state of imperfection, on purpose to stir up human industry, without which life would stagnate, or indeed rather could not subsist at all: *Curis acuunt mortalia corda.*

*Swift's thoughts on various subjects.*

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such



such instances, they appear to be consequences only from general laws, which regard the whole more than particulars; and therefore are not marks of malevolence in the author and governor of the world. Were there any doubt about the tendency of such instances, it would be more rational to ascribe them to want of power, than want of benevolence, which is so conspicuous in other instances. But we cannot rationally ascribe them to either, but to the pre-established order and constitution of things, and to the necessary imperfection of all created beings. And after all, laying the greatest weight upon these natural evils that can reasonably be demanded, the account stands thus. Instances without number of benevolence, in the frame and government of this world, so direct and clear, as not to admit of the smallest dubiety. On the other side natural evils are stated, which, at best, are very doubtful instances of malevolence, and may be ascribed, perhaps obscurely, to another cause. In balancing this account, where the evil appearances are so far outnumbered by the good, why should we hesitate a moment to ascribe pure benevolence to the Deity, and to conclude these evils to be necessary defects in a good constitution; especially when it is so repugnant to our natural perceptions, to ascribe great benevolence and great malevolence to the same being?

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IT will be remarked, that, in answering the foregoing objection to the benevolence of the Deity, I have avoided urging any argument from our future existence; though it affords a fruitful field of comfort, greatly overbalancing the transitory evils of this life. But I should scarce think it fair reasoning, to urge such topics upon this subject; which would be arguing in a circle; because the benevolence of the Deity is the only solid foundation upon which we can build a future existence.

HAVING discussed what occurred upon natural evil, we come now to consider moral evil as an objection against the benevolence of the Deity. And some writers carry this objection so far, as to conclude, that God is the cause of moral evil, since he hath given man a constitution, by which moral evil doth, and must abound. It is certainly no satisfying answer to this objection, that moral evil is the necessary consequence of human liberty; when it is a very possible supposition, that man might have been endued with a moral sense, so lively and strong, as to be absolutely authoritative over his actions. Waving, therefore, the argument from human liberty, we must look about for a more solid answer to the objection; which will not be difficult, when we consider this matter, as laid down in a former essay\*. It is there made out, it is hoped, to the

\* Essay upon liberty and necessity.

satisfaction

satisfaction of the reader, that human actions are, all of them, directed by general laws, which have an operation, not less infallible, than those laws have which govern mere matter; and though this branch of our nature is kept out of sight, yet that in reality we are necessary agents. Thus all things in the moral as well as material world proceed according to settled laws established by Providence. We have a just ground of conviction, that all matters are by Providence ordered in the best manner, and therefore that even human vices and frailties are made to answer wise and benevolent purposes. Every thing possesses its proper place in the divine plan. All our actions contribute equally to carry on the great and good designs of our Maker; and, therefore, there is nothing which in his sight is ill; at least, nothing which is ill upon the whole.

CONSIDERING the objection in the foregoing sight, which is the true one, it loses its force. For it certainly will not be maintained as an argument against the goodness of the Deity, that he endued man with a sense of moral evil; which, in reality, is one of the greatest blessings bestowed upon him, and which eminently distinguishes him from the brute creation.

BUT if, now, the objection be turned into another shape, and it be demanded, Why was not every man endued with so strong a sense of morality,

rality, as to be completely authoritative over all his principles of action, which would prevent much remorse to himself, and much mischief to others? it is answered, first, That this would not be sufficient for an exact regularity of conduct, unless man's judgment of right and wrong were also infallible. For, as long as we differ about what is *yours*, and what is *mine*, injustice must be the consequence, in many instances, however innocent we be. But, in the next place, to complain of a defect in the moral sense, is to complain, that we are not perfect creatures. And, if this complaint be well founded, we may, with equal justice, complain, that our understanding is but moderate, and that, in general, our powers and faculties are limited. Why should imperfection in the moral sense be urged as an objection, when all our senses, internal and external, are imperfect? In short, if this complaint be, in any measure, just, it must go the length, as above observed, to prove, that it is not consistent with the benevolence of the Deity, to create such a being as man.

C O N.



## CONCLUSION.

**W**E have thus gone through a variety of subjects, not without labour, and expence of thought. And now, like a traveller, who, after examining the different parts of a country, ascends some eminence to review the whole; let us refresh ourselves, by looking back, and enjoying the discoveries we have made.

THE subject of these essays is man. We have formed no imaginary schemes for exalting, or for depressing his nature. The inquiry has been, whether his capacities and powers suit his present circumstances, and fit him for acting a proper part in life? We begin with examining some of the great springs of action. Upon accurate scrutiny, it is found, that self-love, or desire of good, is not our sole principle of action; but that we are furnished, besides, with a variety of impelling powers. Mingled in society, for the convenience of mutual help, it is necessary that we feel for each other. But as the feeling for another's sorrow, cannot but be painful, here is traced an admirable contrivance to reconcile us to this virtuous pain, by taking off that aversion to pain, which, in all other cases, is an over-ruling principle. This explains a seemingly strange phænomenon, that we should seek entertainment

tainment from representations which immerse us in the deepest affliction. From man as a social, we proceed to man as a moral agent. We find him sensible of beauty, in different ranks and orders ; and eminently sensible of it, in its highest order, that of sentiment, action, and character. But the sense of moral beauty is not alone sufficient. The importance of morality requires some stronger principle to guard it ; some checks and restraints from vice, more severe than mere disapprobation. These are not wanting. To the sense of beauty, is superadded a sense of obligation, a perception of *right* and *wrong*, which constitutes a law within us. This law enjoins the primary virtues, those which are essential to society, under the strictest sanctions. Pain, the strongest monitor, is here employed to check transgression ; whilst in the sublimer more heroic virtues, where strict obligation ends, pleasure is employed to reward the performance. No action is made a duty, to which we are not antecedently disposed by some principle. An exact proportion is maintained betwixt the strength of our internal principles, and their usefulness. From self, the object of our most vigorous principles, affection spreads through all the connections we have with others ; till, among persons indifferent and unknown, it is totally sunk. After it is thus lost, by the distance of particular objects, nature has an admirable artifice for reviving its force, by directing it on the abstract idea

idea of a public and a whole ; which, though faint and obscure in the conception, is yet equal to any of our ideas in force and energy. Man is, in this manner, furnished for acting a proper and useful part in the system to which he belongs. But this system could not be regulated upon any pre-adjusted plan, the actions of man could not proceed with any order, nor be subject to any government, unless all men were determined by motives. At the same time, man could not answer the purposes of active life, without conceiving himself to be a free agent. Hence the necessity of giving his mind a peculiar cast ; in which we cannot but discern the brightest characters of designing wisdom. By having his perceptions formed upon a delusive sense of contingency, scope is given for a far richer and more diversified scene of action, than the consciousness of necessity could have admitted. Having made out, that morals are established on an immoveable foundation, we proceed to show, by what inward powers we are led to the knowledge and belief of some of the most important truths ; particularly, the existence of the Deity. To this we pave the way, by a full preparation of reasoning. We first consider the nature of that act of the mind which is termed *belief* ; of which the immediate foundation is the testimony of our senses. If the testimony they give to the real existence of a material world, be a mere illusion, as some have held, all belief founded

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on our own perceptions is at an end. Hence appears the absurdity of denying the authority of our senses. And here we find full satisfaction. For, in other cases, where there is any thing like artifice in the conduct of nature, means are afforded, both of discovering the truth, and of discovering the end for which truth is artfully concealed: for nature never deceives us but for our good. In the case of external existences, we find nothing, after the strictest scrutiny, but suppositions, and fallacious reasonings, opposed to the clearest testimony which nature can give. Dispersing, with no great labour, that philosophic dust which sceptics have raised about material substance, we find, upon examination, that we have a conception of it, not less clear than of qualities; both being equally displayed to us by the sense of sight. But belief is not more solidly founded upon our external senses, than upon our internal feelings. Not the greatest sceptic ever doubted of his own personal identity, continued through the successive periods of life; of his being the same man this year he was the last: which, however, is a discovery made by no reasoning; resting wholly upon an inward sense and consciousness of the fact. Upon a like foundation rests our belief of cause and effect. No relation is more familiar than this, nor sooner takes hold of the mind. Yet certain it is, that no reasoning, no experience, can discover the power or energy of what we term

term a *cause*, when we attempt to trace it to its source. It is necessary for the well-being of man, first, that he should perceive the objects which exist around him; and next, that he should perceive them in their true state, not detached and loose, but as causes and effects, as producing and produced. Nature hath furnished us with external senses, for the perception of objects, not only as simply existing, but as existing thus related to each other. Nor without such faculties could we ever have attained the idea of cause and effect. The same provision is made by nature in another case, not less remarkable than the former. Our senses can only inform us of objects as presently existing. Yet nothing is more common, than from our knowledge of the present, and our experience of the past, to reason about the future. Now, all reasonings about futurity, which have such extensive influence on our conduct, would be utterly destitute of a foundation, were we not endued with a sense of uniformity and constancy in the operations of nature. A secret instinct founds this conclusion, that the future will be like the past. Thus there is established a marvellous harmony betwixt our inward perceptions and the course of external events. In the above-mentioned instances, we attribute to our boasted reason, what, in truth, is performed by sense or instinct. Without knowing it to be such, we trust to it. We act upon its informations, with equal confidence,

dence, as we do upon the clearest conclusions of reason: and, in fact, it does not oftener mislead us. Nature thus most effectually provides for our instruction, in things the most necessary to be known. But this is not all. We pursue the argument into an intuitive perception of the Deity. He hath not left us to collect his existence from abstract or perplexed arguments, but makes us perceive intuitively that he exists. When external objects are presented to our view, some are immediately distinguished to be effects, not by any process or deduction of reasoning, but merely by sight, which gives us the perception of cause and effect. Just in the same manner, this whole world is seen or discovered to be an effect produced by some invisible designing cause. The evidence of this perception cannot be rejected, without introducing universal scepticism; without overthrowing all that is built upon perceptions, which, in many capital instances, govern our judgments and actions; and without obliging us to doubt of those things, of which no man ever doubted. For, as in viewing an external object, the sense of sight produces the idea of substance, as well as of quality; as by an intuitive perception we discover some things to be effects requiring a cause; as, from experience of the past, instinct prompts us to judge of the future; in fine, as by the sense of identity the reader is conscious of being the same person he was when he began to read: as all these

these conclusions, I say, upon which mankind rest with the fullest assurance, are the dictates of senses external and internal; in the very same way, and upon the same evidence, we conclude the existence of a first Supreme Cause. Reason, when applied to, gives us all its aid, both to confirm the certainty of his being, and to discover his perfections. From effects so great and so good as those we see through the universe, we necessarily infer the cause to be both great and good. Mixed or imperfect qualities cannot belong to him. The difficulties from apparent evil, are found capable of a satisfactory solution. All the general laws of the universe, are confessedly wise and good. Pain is found not to be useful only, but necessary, in the present system. If this be an argument of an imperfect state, yet must it not be admitted, that, somewhere in the scale of existence, an imperfect order of beings must be found? And why not man such a being? unless we extravagantly demand, that, to prove the benevolence of the Deity, all the possible orders of being should be advanced to the top of the scale, and all be left void and waste below; no life, no existence allowed, except what is perfect. The more of nature is explored and known, the less of evil appears. New discoveries of wisdom, order, and good intention, are the never-failing effects of enlarged knowledge; an intimation, not obscure, of its being owing to our imperfect and bounded views, that evil is

supposed to take place at all. Now, when we consider all these things in one complex view ; so many striking instances of final causes ; such undeniable proofs both of wise design, and skilful execution ; banishing cold distrust of the great universal cause, are we not raised to the highest admiration ! Doth not this subject powerfully kindle a noble enthusiasm ? And doth it not encourage us to attempt a higher strain ?

“ FOR do not all these wonders, *O Eternal*  
 “ *Mind!* Sovereign Architect of all ! form a  
 “ hymn to thy praise ? If in the dead inanimate  
 “ works of nature, thou art seen ; if in the ver-  
 “ dure of the fields, and the azure of the skies,  
 “ the ignorant rustic admire thy creative power ;  
 “ how blind must that man be, who, looking  
 “ into his own nature, contemplating this living  
 “ structure, this moral frame, discerns not thy  
 “ forming hand ? What various and complica-  
 “ ted machinery is here ! and regulated with  
 “ what exquisite art ! Whilst man pursues hap-  
 “ piness as his chief aim, thou bendest self-love  
 “ into the social direction. Thou infusest the  
 “ generous principle, which makes him feel for  
 “ sorrows not his own : nor feels he only, but,  
 “ strange indeed ! takes delight in rushing into  
 “ foreign misery ; and, with pleasure, goes to  
 “ drop the painful tear over real or imaginary  
 “ wo. Thy divine hand thus strongly drew  
 “ the connecting tye, and by sympathy linked  
 “ man

“ man to man ; that nothing might be solitary  
“ or desolate in thy world ; but all tend and  
“ work toward mutual association. For this  
“ great end he is not left to a loose or arbitrary  
“ range of will. Thy wise decree hath erected  
“ within him a throne for virtue. There thou  
“ hast not decked her with beauty only to his  
“ admiring eye, but thrown around her the aw-  
“ ful effulgence of authority divine. Her per-  
“ suasions have the force of a precept ; and her  
“ precepts are a law indispensable. Man feels  
“ himself bound by this law, strict and immu-  
“ table : and yet the privilege of supererogating  
“ is left ; a field opened for free and generous  
“ action ; in which, performing a glorious  
“ course, he may attain the high reward, by  
“ thee allotted, of inward honour and self-esti-  
“ mation. Nothing is made superfluously severe,  
“ nothing left dangerously loose, in thy moral  
“ institution ; but every active principle made to  
“ know its proper place. In just proportion,  
“ man’s affections diverge from himself to ob-  
“ jects around him. Where the diverging rays,  
“ too widely scattered, begin to lose their  
“ warmth ; collecting them again by the idea of  
“ a public, a country, or the universe, thou re-  
“ kindlest the dying flame. Converging eagerly  
“ to this point, behold how intense they glow !  
“ and man, though indifferent to each remote  
“ particular, burns with zeal for the whole. All  
“ things are by thee pre-ordained, great Mover  
“ of

“ of all ! Throughout the wide expanse, every  
“ living creature runs a destin’d course. Whilst  
“ all, under a law irresistible, fulfil thy decrees,  
“ man alone seems to himself exempt ; free to  
“ turn and bend his course at will. Yet is he  
“ not exempt : but, under the impress of  
“ freedom, ministers, in every action, to thy  
“ decree omnipotent, as much as the rolling  
“ sun, or ebbing flood. What strange contra-  
“ dictions are, in thy great scheme, reconciled !  
“ what glaring opposites made to agree ! Necess-  
“ sity and liberty meet in the same agent, yet  
“ interfere not. Man, though free from con-  
“ straint, is under the bonds of necessity. He  
“ discovers himself to be a necessary agent,  
“ and yet acts with perfect liberty. Within the  
“ heart of man thou hast placed thy lamp, to  
“ direct his otherways uncertain steps. By this  
“ light he is not only assured of the existence,  
“ and entertained with all the glories of the ma-  
“ terial world, but is enabled to penetrate into  
“ the recesses of nature. He perceives objects  
“ joined together by the mysterious link of cause  
“ and effect. The connecting principle, though  
“ he can never explain, he is made to perceive,  
“ and is thus instructed, how to refer even things  
“ unknown, to their proper origin. Nay, en-  
“ dued with a prophetic spirit, he foretells  
“ things to come. Where reason is unavailing,  
“ instinct comes in aid, and bestows a power of  
“ divination, which discovers the future by the  
“ past.

“ past. Thus thou gradually liftest him up to  
“ the knowledge of thyself. The plain and  
“ simple sense, which, in the most obvious ef-  
“ fect, reads and perceives a cause, brings him  
“ straight to thee, the first great cause, the an-  
“ cient of days, the eternal source of all. Thou  
“ presentest thyself to us, and we cannot avoid  
“ thee. We must doubt of our own exist-  
“ ence, if we call in question thine. We see  
“ thee by thine own light. We see thee, not  
“ existing only, but in wisdom and in benevo-  
“ lence supreme, as in existence, first. As spots  
“ in the sun’s bright orb, so in the universal  
“ plan, scattered evils are lost in the blaze of  
“ superabundant goodness. Even, by the re-  
“ search of human reason, weak as it is, those  
“ seeming evils diminish and fly away apace.  
“ Objects, supposed superfluous or noxious,  
“ have assumed a beneficial aspect. How much  
“ more, to thine all-penetrating eye, must all ap-  
“ pear excellent and fair! It must be so.  
“ We cannot doubt. Neither imperfection nor  
“ malice dwell with thee. Thou appointest as  
“ salutary, what we lament as painful. Even  
“ the follies and vices of men minister to thy  
“ wise designs: and as at the beginning of days  
“ thou sawest, so thou seest and pronoucest still,  
“ that *every thing thou hast made is good.*”















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