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# BUTLER'S

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THREE SERMONS ON HUMAN NATURE

AND

DISSERTATION ON VIRTUE.

EDITED BY

W. WHEWELL, D.D.

MASTER OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

WITH A PREFACE

AND A SYLLABUS OF THE WORK.

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## EDITOR'S PREFACE.

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**A**N attempt to publish Bishop Butler's Treatises on Human Nature and on Virtue in a perspicuous form, may perhaps not be without interest for the general reader; but it has been made, in the present instance, mainly in consequence of the place which the works occupy in the course of reading prescribed in one, at least, of our Colleges at Cambridge. They were introduced into that course fifteen years ago, it being conceived that they would be useful additions or corrections to other works which enter into the University course. This recommendation they are still conceived to possess: but there appears to be reason to believe that, in consequence of a certain degree of obscurity in Butler's style, his doctrines are often misapprehended by young readers. An attempt will here be made to avert such misapprehension, partly by an arrange-

ment of the text, and partly by a few prefatory remarks.

I hope it will not be considered that I have taken too great a liberty with the text, in dividing it into paragraphs, and numbering the Articles, with reference to the Syllabus which I have drawn up, marking the steps of the argument. I think this arrangement will help to make the reasoning on the doctrines clearer to most readers.

With regard to Butler's doctrines, I suppose it is not questioned that they are, on several points, directly opposed to those of Paley. And those who judged that, on such points, Paley is in error, and that his errors are likely to mislead or perplex those to whom his "Moral Philosophy" is presented with the recommendation of authority, conceived that the evil might be in some measure remedied by recommending an attention to Butler's ethical views at the same time.

Butler's name stands so high among us, that the selection of such a work for this purpose could not be considered either as a capricious act, or as any mark of disrespect towards his adversary.

The points of opposition between Butler and Paley are obvious enough. Paley declares his intention (B. I. c. vi.) to omit the "usual declamation" on the dignity and capacity of our nature; the superiority of the soul to the body, of the rational to the animal part of our constitution; upon the worthiness, refinement and delicacy of some satisfaction, or the meanness, grossness, and sensuality of others. Butler, on the contrary, teaches that there *is* a difference of *kind* among our principles of action, which is quite distinct from their difference of strength [36\*]; that reason was intended to control animal appetite, and that the law of man's nature is violated when the contrary takes place. Paley teaches us to judge of the merit of actions by the advantages to which they lead; Butler [58 and 70] teaches that good-desert and ill-desert are something else than mere tendencies to the advantage and disadvantage of society. Paley makes virtue depend upon the consequences of our actions; Butler makes it depend upon the due operation of our moral constitution. Paley is the moralist of utility; Butler, of conscience.

\* The references are to the articles in this edition.

We must take care, however, that we do not press the antithesis of the two moralists too far; especially as both of them have, by their mode of writing, given openings for misapprehensions. Paley, aiming above all things to say what was lucid and what was practical, often selects modes of expression which violate the habits of previous moral writers, for the very reason that they do so; as in the passage just quoted, when he calls it "declamation," to speak of the dignity and capacity of our nature, the superiority of the soul to the body, of the rational to the animal part of our nature; adding, "I hold that pleasures differ in nothing but in continuance and intensity." So also in his declaration that "whatever is expedient is right." Such expressions as this last, if taken in the usual sense of the words, are altogether immoral; since they acknowledge no necessary moral superiority of truth over falsehood, or kindness over cruelty; and the preceding tenet, recognizing no necessary superiority of human pleasures over those of animals, might be called brutish. Yet Paley's own right feeling leads him to explain away the greater part of that which is vicious and debasing in these expres-

sions. He had no turn for speculative morality; and the errors of his fundamental principles are compensated by other errors in applying them and reasoning from them, so that most of his practical conclusions admit of a harmless sense; although there is likely to remain, in the mind of his readers, a pernicious influence, produced by his disparaging rejection of so many of the most familiar and significant forms in which the moral convictions of all ages have been expressed.

Nor is Butler free from the danger of being misunderstood. There is especially one expression of his, which is likely to lead his readers into an erroneous doctrine; a doctrine, as may easily be shewn, not held by the writer himself. He speaks [34] of the natural supremacy of Conscience. Now this might easily be understood, and has often been understood, as implying the doctrine that Conscience is the supreme and ultimate judge of human actions;—that there is a special faculty so denominated, which is held by the writer to be the ultimate criterion of right and wrong;—that there is a General Conscience in man, which, by its own powers, discloses to him a standard or law of

human action:—or perhaps, that each individual person has such a faculty, which is the proper judge or standard of his actions; and that if he conform his conduct to his conscience, he must act rightly. And this impression may have been much strengthened by the kind of personification of Conscience in which Butler repeatedly indulges; as when he [34] speaks of its *prerogative*; and says [38] that if it had strength as it has right, if it had power as it has authority, it would rule the world. And in like manner, other writers may have confirmed such an impression by speaking of Conscience as an Accuser, a Witness, a Judge, and a Punisher of crime.

The arguments against Conscience, in this sense, being the foundation of morality, are obvious and irresistible. If conscience be the supreme judge of right and wrong, whose conscience is to be taken? If that of the individual, what crimes have not been committed with a tranquil conscience, and even for conscience' sake? If that of the human species, how is it to be found, among the conflicting moral judgments of different persons, nations and ages? These are the argu-



ments never satisfactorily answered, by which the assertion of the Supremacy of Conscience, in the exact sense of the phrase, has always been repelled. If Butler held the Supremacy of Conscience in this sense, those who follow him have to provide replies to these interrogations.

But it will be evident to an attentive reader, that such a supremacy of conscience was not intended by Butler. He did not hold an original and independent faculty of conscience, whose decisions were to be accepted as rules of right action. With him, conscience was a faculty, if you choose, but a faculty, as reason is a faculty; a power by exercising which we may come to discern truths, not a repository of truth already collected in a visible shape. Conscience, indeed, is the Reason, employed about questions of right and wrong, and accompanied with the sentiments of approbation or disapprobation which, by the nature of man, cling inextricably to his apprehension of right and wrong. This, I think, is plainly Butler's view; see, for instance, the passage [54], where he speaks of "a moral faculty; whether called *conscience*, *moral reason*,

*moral sense*, or *divine reason*; whether considered as a perception of the understanding, or as a sentiment of the heart; or, which seems the truth, as including both." And I may observe, that the caution with which Butler, in this and other passages, avoids fixing upon any one term as the permanent designation of the moral faculty, and purposely, as it might seem, accumulates both simple and compound descriptions of it; (besides those already quoted, "Reflection or Conscience, an Approbation of some principles and actions, and a Disapprobation of others;" "Reflex Approbation or Disapprobation;") is evidence that he had no intention of laying down the distinct and independent existence of such a Faculty, as a psychological doctrine.

I have (*Elements of Morality*, Third Ed. Art. 262, &c.) described Conscience as the Faculty or Habit of referring our acts to a moral standard;—as the stage at which we have arrived in our moral progress;—as an authority, not ultimate and supreme, but depending, for its validity, upon its coincidence with the supreme rule; the supreme rule being one

which requires the exercise of reason for its discovery and application. I conceive that this teaching agrees with that of Butler.

And this is illustrated by observing that when Butler has to establish particular Duties, he does not prove them to be Duties by direct reference to conscience, as a supreme internal guide which directly tells us that they are so. He refers to the consequences of actions, and to the purpose for which the various affections and principles of action are implanted in us by our Maker\*. That which we thus learn, is the dictate of Conscience;—the law written in the heart. It is written there, but it requires the use of the Understanding to enable us to read it.

Thus Conscience, though according to Butler she has a natural *authority* over Appetite, Desire, and Affection, has not a *supreme* authority, but is herself subject to the Supreme Rule which enjoins all Virtue and Duty, and which is, in reality, the Law of God. And we may remark that this view explains the relation of two maxims of morality which are generally and justly assented to, but which appear, at

\* See for instance, Sermon IX., On Forgiveness of Injuries.

first sight, to be somewhat inconsistent: namely, these two:—*that to act against one's Conscience is always wrong*\*; but that *to act according to one's Conscience does not ensure being right*. For the Conscience may be darkened or misled or perverted in various ways, and so, may lead men into error and even into crime; but still Conscience, however erroneous, is superior to mere appetite and desire, and is in the right when she controls these inferior springs of action.

If Butler's mode of speaking of Conscience may possibly place him more entirely in opposition to Paley than his real view does; on the other hand, his doctrines may appear to approach more nearly to Paley's than is their true posi-

\* A passage from a popular drama may shew how familiar this doctrine is, (*Lovers' Vows*, Act V. Scene 2.)

*Baron.* Ah, Anhalt, I am glad you are come. My conscience and myself are at variance.

*Anhalt.* Your conscience is in the right.

*Baron.* You don't know yet what the quarrel is.

*Anhalt.* Conscience is always right, because it never speaks unless it is so.

If Anhalt had said "never *contradicts your likings* except when it is right," he would have uttered his maxim in a less dangerous form. The opponents of utilitarian morality have often been charged with holding an instinctive sense of right and wrong; but I think that doctrine has been mainly confined to the sentimental dramatists.

tion, in consequence of his speaking of Virtue sometimes as identical, in the main, with the pursuit of our real Happiness, and sometimes as tending to promote in the greatest degree the Happiness of mankind. Thus [47] he employs himself in shewing that if we seek Happiness, we shall find virtue the best way to it, and asserts [50] that self-love generally coincides with virtue. And in other places, he makes the like assertions or concessions. Thus in his eleventh Sermon (upon the Love of our Neighbour) he says, "It may be allowed, without any prejudice to the cause of virtue and religion, that our ideas of happiness and misery are of all our ideas the nearest and most important to us; that they will, nay, if you please, that they *ought* to prevail over those of order and beauty and harmony and proportion, if there ever should be, *as it is impossible there ever should be*, any inconsistency between them;—though these last two [that is, order and beauty, and harmony and proportion,] as expressing the fitness of action, are *as real as truth itself*." The passages which I have marked in italics shew how far Butler is from giving up our internal standard of Virtue, when he ac-

knowledges its ultimate coincidence with the pursuit of Happiness; yet an adherent of Paley, by omitting these notices of Butler's real opinion, might assert an agreement between the two writers. And in the next sentence, he again says, "Let it be allowed, *though virtue or moral rectitude does indeed consist in affection to and pursuit of what is right and good, as such*; yet that when we sit down in a cool hour, we can neither justify to ourselves this or any other pursuit, till we are convinced that it will be for our happiness, or at least not contrary to it."

The agreement in the results of two systems of morality, constructed by two thoughtful and virtuous men, is what we might naturally look for: and a very little attention will suffice to shew how it comes to pass that Butler so readily assents to a formula which is mainly characteristic of a school very different from his: although it is true, that the use of this formula, as the motto of a school, has become much more distinct and frequent since Butler's time. Butler, in asserting that virtue is the right road to happiness, asserted what was in entire consonance with his own more peculiar doctrine, that virtue

consists in the right operation of man's internal constitution ; because Butler necessarily includes, in his idea of happiness, the tranquillity and peace of mind and satisfaction which arise from a harmonious operation of man's inward faculties and principles. He may well allow that virtue is the pursuit of happiness, because he cannot allow happiness to exist where virtue is not. He allows that we ought to aim at happiness ; and one element of the happiness at which we ought to aim, is the approval of our actions by our own conscience. We have to seek happiness under the impulse of various desires, affections, and principles of action ; and among these principles, is that which approves and disapproves of our actions, and which, as Butler has shewn, is superior in kind and authority to the rest. This, as well as the others, must exercise its due sway, and must be duly satisfied, in order that we may approach towards happiness. Butler could not allow that state to be happiness, in which we gratify the desires and affections, and disregard the voice of conscience. Upon his doctrine, this would be a most unhappy discord and disorder of our nature.

It would not have been possible, therefore,

for Butler to assent to such an account of happiness as that given by Paley (B. I. c. vi.), that it consists in the exercise of the social affections, of the faculties of body and mind, the prudent constitution of the habits, and health. He would naturally say that all these, without the pursuit of good ends by good means, could not make a man happy; still less could they do so, if, with all these, a man were pursuing criminal purposes, or living a life of vice, or labouring under self-accusation or remorse; in all which there is nothing inconsistent with Paley's account of happiness. And thus, whatever casual coincidence there may be in the phrases used here and there by Butler and by Paley, there is a very wide difference in reality between the moral philosophy of the one and of the other.

Paley's chapter on Human Happiness is, indeed, a curious example of his combination of good sense and good feeling with an entire inaptitude for systematic thinking and writing. The chapter might be read as a very pleasing and sensible essay upon those elements of happiness which have *least* to do with the foundations of morality: (for even the social affections are considered only so far as they affect "the



spirits;”) but it has not any connexion with anything which goes before or comes after it. The chapter is indeed verbally connected with the beginning of the succeeding one, in so far that the word *happiness* is prominent in both places. “Virtue is the doing good to mankind in obedience to the will of God, and for the sake of everlasting happiness.” But it is evident that there is scarcely the vestige of a connexion between the sense of the word *happiness* in the one passage and in the other. The passage in which this word *happiness* comes in, so as to shew its real place in Paley’s scheme of morality, is Chapter v. of the second Book; where he says “that the method of coming at the will of God concerning every action by the light of nature, is to inquire into the tendency of that action to promote or diminish the general happiness.” This mode of determining the moral character of actions, by tracing their influence upon the general happiness of mankind, is the mode professed by Paley; but not followed out by him with any logical coherence, in consequence, among other things, of his not having given any account of human happiness which can be used for such a purpose. More recent

writers on morals have endeavoured to execute his plan more completely, by following the course which it obviously suggests;—analysing happiness into its elements, and using this analysis in estimating the moral value of actions. I conceive it might be shewn that the analysis thus given, besides being precarious, is in all cases either incomplete, or is itself dependent upon moral ideas; but I shall not here pursue the subject.

But I may point out what is Butler's view of such a system of morality. In Art. [58] and [70] he teaches us that good desert is not mere tendency to the good of society, and that benevolence is not the whole of virtue: and in [76] he says, with reference to Shaftesbury, what we may say with reference to Paley: that writers "of great and distinguished merit have expressed themselves in a manner which may occasion some danger to careless readers:" namely, the danger of imagining the whole of virtue to consist in aiming rightly at promoting the happiness of mankind in the present state; and the whole of vice in the contrary: than which mistakes, Butler emphatically says, none can be conceived more terrible. Again: in a note on

his twelfth Sermon (upon the Love of our Neighbour) he says:

“As we are not competent judges what is upon the whole for the good of the world, there may be other immediate ends appointed us to pursue, besides that of doing good, or producing happiness. Though the good of the creation be the only end of the Author of it, yet he may have laid us under particular obligations, which we may discern and feel ourselves under, quite distinct from a perception, that the observance or violation of them is for the happiness or misery of our fellow-creatures.”

“And this is in fact the case.” And he then goes on to shew, that “there are certain dispositions of mind, and certain actions, which are in themselves approved and disapproved by mankind, abstracted from their tendency to the happiness or misery of the world;—approved or disapproved by that principle within which is the guide of life, the judge of right and wrong.” He proceeds to mention treachery, indecency, meanness, as dispositions which we disapprove: greatness of mind, fidelity, honour, justice, as things which

we approve, "in quite another view than as conducive to the happiness or misery of the world."

It would be easy to adduce from Butler other passages of the same import: but from what has already been said, it must be obvious how far he is removed from those who define and measure virtue by its tendency to promote human happiness. He does not say that virtue does not do this; but he says that we are not competent judges of what is upon the whole for the good of the world. He willingly grants that the good of the creation may be the only end of the Author of it; but he holds that the same Author of Creation has laid us under particular obligations, which we are to discern and feel in some other way. And this way is, in his creed, a reference to our internal Faculties and Powers, not to external objects and effects. The means of discovering our Duty which he mainly recommends are, the consideration of the plain office and authority of our various faculties, and the judgment of our minds in our calmer hours, when passion and interest are silent. By such a consideration he conceives that we cannot fail to see

the moral value of such ideas as benevolence, justice, veracity, decency, and the like.

Among the other phrases which Butler suggests as used to describe the moral Faculty of man [54] he introduces *Moral Sense*; a term which has become more celebrated in consequence of its being employed, or supposed to be employed, by some moralists to imply a sense which discerns the moral qualities of its objects directly and immediately, as the sight discerns colours, or the taste savours. It may be doubted whether such a crude and physical notion of a Moral Sense was ever entertained by any thoughtful moralist: for the judgment of man concerning actions as good or bad cannot be expressed or formed, without reference to language, to social relations, to acknowledged rights: and the apprehension of these implies the agency of the understanding in a manner quite different from the perceptions of the bodily senses. It is plain, at least, as I have already said, that Butler never dreamt of asserting a Moral Sense in any such use of the term as this. Paley, with his usual love of clearness, and his usual inaptitude in what concerns systems, has stated

the question of the Moral Sense in the most exaggerated physical form. He supposes a case of parricide to be stated to "a savage without experience, and without instruction, cut off in his infancy from all intercourse with his species, and consequently under no possible influence of example, authority, education, sympathy, or habit;" and he enquires whether such a creature would disapprove of the parricide. To this we might reply, that such a creature would be no evidence of what is the natural operation of the faculties of man, as man, a social creature, necessarily educated by social intercourse; any more than Caspar Hauser, the wild boy, who, after being kept pinioned from childhood to manhood, tottered into the streets of Nurenberg, is evidence of man's natural faculty of walking. Such a creature as Paley describes is, for the present, not so much a man, as a brute. But we may add further, that though a brute, he *would*, as a brute, disapprove of parricide, if his disapproval be collected from his actions; which, language being supposed to be excluded, is the only way in which the sentiments of brutes can be collected. The mutual affection

of the parents and offspring among brutes is a germ of the human affections which make us condemn parricide and child-murder as *unnatural* crimes.

With regard to Paley's subsequent remarks in the same chapter, that we approve at first those qualities in others which are beneficial to ourselves, that the sentiment thus becomes associated with the quality, and that this is the way in which men come to a general agreement with regard to the moral qualities which they admire,—I conceive that Butler would by no means agree with him, or allow that we are led at first to admire fidelity, honour, justice, magnanimity, by considering that these qualities are beneficial, or likely to be beneficial, to ourselves. Nor do I conceive that either the nature of the admiration which we bestow, or the manner in which it grows up, so far as we can observe its growth (for instance, in children,) agrees with this account of it. As I have said, Butler does not assert a Moral Sense to exist in any technical or distinct form; but I conceive that he does assert it to be the natural tendency of the human mind to approve benevolence, veracity,

justice, and the like, without waiting for a calculation of the consequences of such qualities. And this doctrine is not inconsistent with the actual and unblamed practice, among men, of actions which are not benevolent, faithful, and just; because it may be that the acts in question are considered by the actors under some other point of view; if indeed they are treated at all as matters of morality, and are not rather the results of ungoverned impulses of passion. Thus, cruelty to enemies is, perhaps, considered as fidelity to friends, or as justice; and however narrow and blind this morality be, it does not approve of cruelty *as such*. To see what benevolence, veracity, and justice really require of men, under given circumstances, is, no doubt, the office not of any simple Sense or Faculty, operating by direct perception, but of the rational and moral Faculties of man, guided by the best light that can be procured for them. But this does not prove that men must arrive at their decision by calculating the total amount of pleasure or happiness which any given course of conduct would produce. This, Butler, in a passage which I have already quoted, con-



ceives to be a point of which we are not competent judges; and he refers us to other methods of determining what is our Duty.

But though to calculate the consequences of actions be not a safe way, nor generally a practicable way, and still less, the only way of determining how far the actions are virtuous or vicious, no thoughtful moralist ever doubts that virtuous acts do really, and upon the whole, promote the good and happiness of mankind, when all the elements of good and happiness are taken into the account. And though many of these elements may be too subtle and various to be described and measured in our calculation, (as the state of mind and heart) and though the operation of our actions upon these elements (that is, the effect of our actions upon our own minds and those of others) may be impossible to appreciate,—yet, we can, to a certain extent, trace the way in which virtuous actions tend to the happiness, and vicious actions to the unhappiness, of mankind. And so far as we can do this, it is a pleasant and healthful employment of our minds. In several instances Paley has pursued this employment in a lucid, lively,

and sensible manner; and in this point of view, parts of his work may be read with profit and pleasure. If the work had been entitled *Morality as derived from General Utility*, and if the Principle had been taken for granted, instead of being supported by the proofs which Paley offers, the work might have been received with unmingled gratitude; and the excellent sense and temper which for the most part it shews in the application of rules, might have produced their beneficial effect without any drawback.

I will now proceed to make a few remarks with a view of illustrating particular parts of the treatises of Butler here printed.

The first Sermon has for its object to shew that man's nature is as truly social as it is selfish. The occasion of this is the same as that which is stated in the Preface with regard to the eleventh Sermon. "There is a strange affectation in many people of explaining away all particular affections, and representing the whole of life as one continuous exercise of self-love." And he proceeds to instance this in the Epicureans, Hobbes, and La Rochefoucault. And in the first Sermon also, he

refers to Hobbes, and especially to that part of his "Human Nature," in which he gives his account of *good-will* or *charity*, as being a form of the love of power, (chap. ix. sect. 17). "There is yet another Passion sometimes called *Love*, but more properly *Good-will*, or *Charity*. There can be no greater argument to a man of his own Power, than to find himself able not only to accomplish his own desires, but also to assist other men in theirs; and this is that conception wherein consisteth *Charity*. In which, first, is contained that *natural affection* of parents to their children, which the Greeks call  $\Sigma\tauοργῆ$ , as also that affection wherewith men seek to assist those that adhere unto them." This strange and arbitrary dogma Butler refutes. (Note to Art. [3]).

The truth of the distinctions established by Butler on this subject, has been recognised and confirmed by succeeding writers; for instance, Dugald Stewart, Brown, and Mackintosh. The result of such true distinctions appears naturally in a systematic enumeration and arrangement of the principles or springs of human action. In the *Elements of Morality*

I have had occasion to make such an enumeration; and I have arranged the springs of human action as—the *Appetites*, (Hunger, Thirst, &c.) the *Affections*, (Love of various kinds, and Anger), the *Desires*; namely, the Desire of Safety, the Desire of Having, the Desire of Society, the Desire of Superiority, the Desire of Knowledge, the Desire of Esteem, with other Desires. After these I have arranged *Self-love*, as a more complex, derivative, and reflective principle than the others. It is evident, indeed, that Self-love, in any precise use of the term, is, as Butler says, both distinct from the elementary appetites and desires, and in its operation presupposes the particular appetites and desires belonging to that *self* which we love, and which we wish to gratify.

Perhaps some light is thrown upon the inclination that some men have to call all our springs of action *selfish*, by what is said on the subject of *Mental Desires*; (*Elements of Morality*, Art. 49) that the Mental Desires include the Appetites and Affections, and take the place of them in our contemplation. Though the Love of Money is different from the Love

of Good Eating, it may take the place of it, in him by whom money is sought mainly as the means of procuring good cheer: and though Self-love may be different from the Love of Money, yet Self-love exists there especially where a man's aim of life is to gratify his own Love of Money and similar desires. And thus however different Self-love may be from elementary Appetites and Desires, it is a mental habit which sums up in an abstract form the results of appetites and desires; and it may be confounded with its elements, by men seeking to shew their sagacity in the analysis of human principles of action.

In fact however, as we see by this remark, the term *selfish* does not apply with any propriety to the appetites, or affections, but to the man himself. It is not his Elementary Desires which are selfish, but his habit of mind which makes *him* so. It is not that either Hunger or Maternal Love can, with any meaning, be called *Self-love*, but that the character involving these elements, may be selfish, as it may also be unselfish, however much these springs of action exist. A man may be unselfish, however hungry he be, and however

heartily he eat, if he give to others what they need; a mother, however fond of her child, would be called selfish, if she were to allow him to burn down a neighbour's house for his amusement.

When the character, or mental habit, is thus selfish, it is evident that the springs of action, the elementary affections and appetites, are not under that control of which we can approve. And thus the term *selfish* denotes not a positive and definite attribute, but a comparative quality to which some blame inevitably clings. This agrees with what Stewart says, (*Outlines of Moral Philosophy*, Art. 168): "The word *Selfishness* is always used in an unfavourable sense; and hence, some authors have been led to suppose that vice consists in an excessive regard to our own happiness. It is remarkable, however, that, although we apply the epithet *selfish* to avarice, and to low and private sensuality, we never apply it to the desire of knowledge, or to the pursuits of virtue, which are certainly sources of more exquisite pleasure than Riches or Sensuality can bestow." And Mackintosh says, (*Dissertation*, p. 193): "The weakness of the social

affections and the strength of the private desires constitute selfishness."

With regard to the subject of the second and third Sermons, the peculiar character and "supremacy" of the conscience or moral faculty, many modern writers, and especially Mackintosh, ascribe to Butler the merit of having first brought these doctrines into a clear light. I have already stated the objection which may, I think not unreasonably, be urged against the use of the term *supremacy* in this case.

In this place, where we are familiar with the study of the great moral writers of antiquity, it is interesting to us to note the points of resemblance between their doctrines and those of our most admired modern moralists. The agreement between the moral philosophy of Plato and of Butler is, indeed, very striking. In Plato's *Dialogue on the Republic*, as in Butler's *Sermons*, the human soul is represented as a system, a constitution, an organized whole, in which the different elements have not merely their places side by side, but their places above and below each other, with their appointed offices; and virtue or moral rightness consists in the due operation of this constitution, the

actual realization of this organized subordination. We may notice too, that Plato, like Butler, is remarkable among moralists for the lucid and forcible manner in which he has singled out from man's springs of action the irascible element, (his *θυμοειδές* ; Butler's *Resentment*;) and taught its true place and office in a moral scheme.

Aristotle's ethical doctrines are less philosophically definite than those of Plato; but in their general import they agree very nearly with those asserted by Butler. Thus Aristotle begins by treating of the end of human action, *Happiness*; and though he thus appears to make an external end the sovereign guide of action, and thus to differ from Butler, he soon introduces an element which makes this guide cease to be an external one, by telling us (*Eth. Nicom.* i. 7), that the happiness of man involves "the activity of the mind in the way of virtue." For thus, Virtue and Happiness always and necessarily coincide, which Butler everywhere asserts; while Virtue is not derived from external objects, which would be contrary to Butler's scheme.

Butler's sympathies, however, as to philoso-



phical doctrine, are undoubtedly with the Stoics. In order to describe the peculiar sentiment of rejection and disapproval with which we regard actions unjust or otherwise wrong, he borrows the *formula* of the Stoics, which Cicero had borrowed before him, and in which such actions are said to be *contrary to nature*. See the passage in Cicero's Offices: (iii. 4: "Redeo ad formulam. Detrahere aliquid alteri, et hominem hominis incommodo suum augere commodum magis est contra naturam quam mors, quam paupertas, quam dolor, quam cætera, quæ possunt aut corpori accidere aut rebus externis.") And in the Dissertation on Virtue [52] Butler quotes the commencement of that classical work of the later Stoics, Arrian's *Epictetus*: in which we read that "Of the other faculties, you will find none which contemplates itself, (*αὐτὴν αὐτῆς θεωρητικὴν*;) still less which approves and disapproves its own acts:" (*δοκιμαστικὴν ἢ ἀποδοκιμαστικὴν*;) which way of speaking, Butler says, he has adopted as the most full and the least liable to cavil.

It is indeed evident that the two opposite moral schools of antiquity, the Stoical and the Epicurean, have had their antagonism prolonged

into modern times; nor can it cease to subsist so long as there is a school of Independent Morality, which, like Butler, seeks the ground of virtue or moral rightness in the faculties of man and their relation to each other; and another School of Dependent Morality, which, like Paley, looks for the criterion of rightness to external things;—pleasure, utility, expediency, or by whatever name it may be called. That Paley is the successor of the Epicurean, as Butler is the adherent of the Stoical school, is evident on the face of his system. And this is a view which probably he would not himself have repudiated. His first literary production, I believe, was a “Bachelor’s prize” Essay, to which the prize was adjudged by the University in 1765. The subject of this essay was a comparison between the Stoic and Epicurean philosophy, and in this he had, as was natural with his habits of mind, taken the Epicurean side. Nor was this an effusion hastily and lightly flung from his pen; for it was accompanied with elaborate notes in English, and is still recollected as bearing marks of that vivacity of thought and expression, for which his writings were afterwards so justly admired.

I have inserted the whole of the Author's *Preface* to the Sermons. The introductory part of this Preface contains an able and instructive Apology for the obscurity which is sometimes alleged as a defect of these discourses. The notice of Sermon XI., which occupies the most space after that of Sermons I., II., III., applies also to Sermon I. The notices of the other Sermons are very brief, and may serve to remind the reader that the Sermons here printed extend to a small portion only of the subject of Morality according to Butler's view.

TRINITY LODGE, *March* 14, 1848.

IN the preceding Preface, it is stated as one of the recommendations of the study of Butler's ethical works, that this study may be useful in correcting the impressions which may be produced by the study of Paley's "Moral Philosophy," as required by the University for the B.A. Degree. It may therefore be proper to notice that by a Grace of the Senate, passed Feb. 7, 1855, an acquaintance with Paley's work is no longer required by the University. But the University has shewn that this step was not taken from any disposition to reject the study of Ethics; for Moral Philosophy is one of the Subjects in which a Certificate of a satisfactory Examination given by the Professor is accepted as a condition for the B.A. Degree; and also one of the Subjects for which Honours are assigned in the Moral Sciences Tripos. And whatever may be thought of Paley, Butler's ethical views are, I believe, generally accepted in the University. If his works had contained a System of Morality, and not mere fragments of a system and discussions of principles, probably he would have been installed in the place from which Paley has been removed.

TRINITY LODGE, *February 8, 1855.*

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## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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THOUGH it is scarce possible to avoid judging, in some way or other, of almost every thing which offers itself to one's thoughts; yet it is certain, that many persons, from different causes, never exercise their judgment, upon what comes before them, in the way of determining whether it be conclusive, and holds. They are perhaps entertained with some things, not so with others; they like, and they dislike: but whether that which is proposed to be made out be really made out or not; whether a matter be stated according to the real truth of the case, seems to the generality of people merely a circumstance of no consideration at all. Arguments are often wanted for some accidental purpose: but proof as such is what they never want for themselves; for their own satisfaction of mind, or conduct in life. Not to mention the multitudes who read merely for the sake of talking, or to qualify themselves for the world, or some such kind of reasons; there are, even of the

few who read for their own entertainment, and have a real curiosity to see what is said, several, which is prodigious, who have no sort of curiosity to see what is true: I say, curiosity; because it is too obvious to be mentioned, how much that religious and sacred attention, which is due to truth, and to the important question, *What is the rule of life?* is lost out of the world.

For the sake of this whole class of readers, for they are of different capacities, different kinds, and get into this way from different occasions, I have often wished, that it had been the custom to lay before people nothing in matters of argument but premises, and leave them to draw conclusions themselves; which, though it could not be done in all cases, might in many.

The great number of books and papers of amusement, which, of one kind or another, daily come in one's way, have in part occasioned, and most perfectly fall in with and humour, this idle way of reading and considering things. By this means, time even in solitude is happily got rid of, without the pain of attention: neither is any part of it more put to the account of idleness, one can scarce forbear saying, is spent with less thought, than great part of that which is spent in reading.

Thus people habituate themselves to let things pass through their minds, as one may

speak, rather than to think of them. Thus by use they become satisfied merely with seeing what is said, without going any further. Review and attention, and even forming a judgment, becomes fatigue; and to lay any thing before them that requires it, is putting them quite out of their way.

There are also persons, and there are at least more of them than have a right to claim such superiority, who take for granted, that they are acquainted with every thing; and that no subject, if treated in the manner it should be, can be treated in any manner but what is familiar and easy to them.

It is true, indeed, that few persons have a right to demand attention; but it is also true, that nothing can be understood without that degree of it, which the very nature of the thing requires. Now morals, considered as a science, concerning which speculative difficulties are daily raised, and treated with regard to those difficulties, plainly require a very peculiar attention. For here ideas never are in themselves determinate, but become so by the train of reasoning and the place they stand in; since it is impossible that words can always stand for the same ideas, even in the same author, much less in different ones. Hence an argument may not readily be apprehended, which is different from its being mistaken;

and even caution to avoid being mistaken may, in some cases, render it less readily apprehended. It is very unallowable for a work of imagination or entertainment not to be of easy comprehension, but may be unavoidable in a work of another kind, where a man is not to form or accommodate, but to state things as he finds them.

It must be acknowledged, that some of the following Discourses are very abstruse and difficult; or, if you please, obscure; but I must take leave to add, that those alone are judges, whether or no and how far this is a fault, who are judges, whether or no and how far it might have been avoided—those only who will be at the trouble to understand what is here said, and to see how far the things here insisted upon, and not other things, might have been put in a plainer manner; which yet I am very far from asserting that they could not.

Thus much however will be allowed, that general criticisms concerning obscurity considered as a distinct thing from confusion and perplexity of thought, as in some cases there may be ground for them; so in others, they may be nothing more at the bottom than complaints, that every thing is not to be understood with the same ease that some things are. Confusion and perplexity in writing is indeed without excuse, because any one may,

if he pleases, know whether he understands and sees through what he is about: and it is unpardonable for a man to lay his thoughts before others, when he is conscious that he himself does not know whereabouts he is, or how the matter before him stands. It is coming abroad in disorder, which he ought to be dissatisfied to find himself in at home.

But even obscurities arising from other causes than the abstruseness of the argument may not be always inexcusable. Thus a subject may be treated in a manner, which all along supposes the reader acquainted with what has been said upon it, both by ancient and modern writers; and with what is the present state of opinion in the world concerning such subject. This will create a difficulty of a very peculiar kind, and even throw an obscurity over the whole before those who are not thus informed; but those who are will be disposed to excuse such a manner, and other things of the like kind, as a saving of their patience.

However upon the whole, as the title of *Sermons* gives some right to expect what is plain and of easy comprehension, and as the best auditories are mixed, I shall not set about to justify the propriety of preaching, or under that title publishing, Discourses so abstruse as some of these are: neither is it worth while

to trouble the reader with the account of my doing either. He must not however impute to me, as a repetition of the impropriety, this second edition\*, but to the demand for it.

Whether he will think he has any amends made him by the following illustrations of what seemed most to require them, I myself am by no means a proper judge.

(I, II, III.) There are two ways in which the subject of morals may be treated. One begins from inquiring into the abstract relations of things: the other from a matter of fact, namely, what the particular nature of man is, its several parts, their economy or constitution; from whence it proceeds to determine what course of life it is, which is correspondent to this whole nature. In the former method the conclusion is expressed thus, that vice is contrary to the nature and reason of things: in the latter, that it is a violation or breaking in upon our own nature. Thus they both lead us to the same thing, our obligations to the practice of virtue; and thus they exceedingly strengthen and enforce each other. The first seems the most direct formal proof, and in some respects the least liable to cavil and dispute: the latter is in a peculiar manner adapted to satisfy a fair mind; and is

\* The preface stands exactly as it did before the second edition of the Sermons.

more easily applicable to the several particular relations and circumstances in life.

The following Discourses proceed chiefly in this latter method. The three first wholly. They were intended to explain what is meant by the *nature of man*, when it is said that virtue consists in following, and vice in deviating from it; and by explaining to shew that the assertion is true. That the ancient moralists had some inward feeling or other, which they chose to express in this manner, that *man is born to virtue*, that *it consists in following nature*, and that *vice is more contrary to this nature* than tortures or death, their works in our hands are instances. Now a person who found no mystery in this way of speaking of the ancients; who without being very explicit with himself, kept to his natural feeling, went along with them, and found within himself a full conviction, that what they laid down was just and true; such a one would probably wonder to see a point, in which he never perceived any difficulty, so laboured as this is, in the second and third Sermons; insomuch perhaps as to be at a loss for the occasion, scope, and drift of them. But it need not be thought strange that this manner of expression, though familiar with them, and, if not usually carried so far, yet not uncommon amongst ourselves, should want explaining;

since there are several perceptions daily felt and spoken of, which yet it may not be very easy at first view to explicate, to distinguish from all others, and ascertain exactly what the idea or perception is. The many treatises upon the passions are a proof of this; since so many would never have undertaken to unfold their several complications, and trace and resolve them into their principles, if they had thought, what they were endeavouring to shew was obvious to every one, who felt and talked of those passions. Thus, though there seems no ground to doubt, but that the generality of mankind have the inward perception expressed so commonly in that manner by the ancient moralists, more than to doubt whether they have those passions; yet it appeared of use to unfold that inward conviction, and lay it open in a more explicit manner, than I had seen done; especially when there were not wanting persons, who manifestly mistook the whole thing, and so had great reason to express themselves dissatisfied with it. A late author of great and deserved reputation says, that to place *virtue* in *following nature*, is at best a loose way of talk. And he has reason to say this, if what I think he intends to express, though with great decency, be true, that scarce any other sense can be put upon those words, but acting as any of the several parts, with-



out distinction, of a man's nature happened most to incline him\*.

Whoever thinks it worth while to consider this matter thoroughly, should begin with stating to himself exactly the idea of a system, economy, or constitution of any particular nature, or any particular thing: and he will, I suppose, find, that it is a one or a whole, made up of several parts; but yet, that the several parts even considered as a whole do not complete the idea, unless in the notion of a whole you include the relations and respects which those parts have to each other. Every work both of nature and of art is a system: and as every particular thing, both natural and artificial, is for some use or purpose out of and beyond itself, one may add, to what has been already brought into the idea of a system, its conduciveness to this one or more ends. Let us instance in a watch—Suppose the several parts of it taken to pieces, and placed apart from each other: let a man have ever so exact a notion of these several parts, unless he considers the respects and relations which they have to each other, he will not have any thing like the idea of a watch. Suppose these several parts brought together and any how united: neither will he yet, be the union ever so close, have an idea which will bear any resemblance

\* Rel. of Nature delin. ed. 1724. pp. 22, 23.

to that of a watch. But let him view those several parts put together, or consider them as to be put together in the manner of a watch; let him form a notion of the relations which those several parts have to each other—all conducive in their respective ways to this purpose, shewing the hour of the day; and then he has the idea of a watch. Thus it is with regard to the inward frame of man. Appetites, passions, affections, and the principle of reflection, considered merely as the several parts of our inward nature, do not at all give us an idea of the system or constitution of this nature; because the constitution is formed by somewhat not yet taken into consideration, namely, by the relations which these several parts have to each other; the chief of which is the authority of reflection or conscience. It is from considering the relations which the several appetites and passions in the inward frame have to each other, and, above all, the supremacy of reflection or conscience, that we get the idea of the system or constitution of human nature. And from the idea itself it will as fully appear, that this our nature, i. e. constitution, is adapted to virtue, as from the idea of a watch it appears, that its nature, i. e. constitution or system, is adapted to measure time. What in fact or event commonly happens is nothing to this question. Every work

of art is apt to be out of order: but this is so far from being according to its system, that let the disorder increase, and it will totally destroy it. This is merely by way of explanation, what an economy, system, or constitution is. And thus far the cases are perfectly parallel. If we go further, there is indeed a difference, nothing to the present purpose, but too important a one ever to be omitted. A machine is inanimate and passive: but we are agents. Our constitution is put in our own power. We are charged with it; and therefore are accountable for any disorder or violation of it.

Thus nothing can possibly be more contrary to nature than vice; meaning by nature not only the *several parts* of our eternal frame, but also the *constitution* of it. Poverty and disgrace, tortures and death, are not so contrary to it. Misery and injustice are indeed equally contrary to some different parts of our nature taken singly: but injustice is moreover contrary to the whole constitution of the nature.

If it be asked, whether this constitution be really what those philosophers meant, and whether they would have explained themselves in this manner; the answer is the same, as if it should be asked, whether a person, who had often used the word *resentment*, and felt the

thing, would have explained this passion exactly in the same manner, in which it is done in one of these Discourses. As I have no doubt, but that this is a true account of that passion, which he referred to and intended to express by the word *resentment*; so I have no doubt, but that this is the true account of the ground of that conviction which they referred to, when they said, vice was contrary to nature. And though it should be thought that they meant no more than that vice was contrary to the higher and better part of our nature; even this implies such a constitution as I have endeavoured to explain. For the very terms, *higher* and *better*, imply a relation or respect of parts to each other; and these relative parts, being in one and the same nature, form a constitution, and are the very idea of it. They had a perception that injustice was contrary to their nature, and that pain was so also. They observed these two perceptions totally different, not in degree, but in kind: and the reflecting upon each of them, as they thus stood in their nature, wrought a full intuitive conviction, that more was due and of right belonged to one of these inward perceptions, than to the other; that it demanded in all cases to govern such a creature as man. So that, upon the whole, this is a fair and true account of what was the ground of their conviction; of what they intended to refer

to, when they said, virtue consisted in following nature: a manner of speaking not loose and undetermined, but clear and distinct, strictly just and true.

Though I am persuaded the force of this conviction is felt by almost every one; yet since, considered as an argument and put in words, it appears somewhat abstruse, and since the connexion of it is broken in the three first Sermons, it may not be amiss to give the reader the whole argument here in one view.

Mankind has various instincts and principles of action, as brute creatures have; some leading most directly and immediately to the good of the community, and some most directly to private good.

Man has several which brutes have not; particularly reflection or conscience, an approbation of some principles or actions, and disapprobation of others.

Brutes obey their instincts or principles of action, according to certain rules; suppose the constitution of their body, and the objects around them.

The generality of mankind also obey their instincts and principles, all of them; those propensions we call good, as well as the bad, according to the same rules; namely, the constitution of their body, and the external circumstances which they are in. [Therefore it is not a true

representation of mankind to affirm, that they are wholly governed by self-love, the love of power and sensual appetites: since, as on the one hand they are often actuated by these, without any regard to right or wrong; so on the other, it is manifest fact, that the same persons, the generality, are frequently influenced by friendship, compassion, gratitude; and even a general abhorrence of what is base, and liking of what is fair and just, takes its turn amongst the other motives of action. This is the partial inadequate notion of human nature treated of in the first Discourse: and it is by this nature, if one may speak so, that the world is in fact influenced, and kept in that tolerable order, in which it is.]

Brutes in acting according to the rules before mentioned, their bodily constitution and circumstances, act suitably to their whole nature. [It is however to be distinctly noted, that the reason why we affirm this is not merely that brutes in fact act so; for this alone, however universal, does not at all determine, whether such course of action be correspondent to their whole nature: but the reason of the assertion is, that as in acting thus they plainly act conformably to somewhat in their nature, so, from all observations we are able to make upon them, there does not appear the least ground to imagine them to have any thing else in their na-

ture, which requires a different rule or course of action.]

Mankind also in acting thus would act suitably to their whole nature, if no more were to be said of man's nature than what has been now said; if that, as it is a true, were also a complete, adequate account of our nature.

But that is not a complete account of man's nature. Somewhat further must be brought in to give us an adequate notion of it; namely, that one of those principles of action, conscience or reflection, compared with the rest as they all stand together in the nature of man, plainly bears upon it marks of authority over all the rest, and claims the absolute direction of them all, to allow or forbid their gratification: a disapprobation of reflection being in itself a principle manifestly superior to a mere propension. And the conclusion is, that to allow no more to this superior principle or part of our nature, than to other parts; to let it govern and guide only occasionally in common with the rest, as its turn happens to come, from the temper and circumstances one happens to be in; this is not to act conformably to the constitution of man: neither can any human creature be said to act conformably to his constitution of nature, unless he allows to that superior principle the absolute authority which is due to it. And this conclusion is abundantly confirmed from hence,

that one may determine what course of action the economy of man's nature requires, without so much as knowing in what degrees of *strength* the several principles prevail, or which of them have actually the greatest influence.

The practical reason of insisting so much upon this natural authority of the principle of reflection or conscience is, that it seems in great measure overlooked by many, who are by no means the worst sort of men. It is thought sufficient to abstain from gross wickedness, and to be humane and kind to such as happen to come in their way. Whereas in reality the very constitution of our nature requires, that we bring our whole conduct before this superior faculty; wait its determination; enforce upon ourselves its authority, and make it the business of our lives, as it is absolutely the whole business of a moral agent, to conform ourselves to it. This is the true meaning of that ancient precept, *Reverence thyself*.

The not taking into consideration this authority, which is implied in the idea of reflex approbation or disapprobation, seems a material deficiency or omission in Lord Shaftesbury's *Inquiry concerning Virtue*. He has shewn beyond all contradiction, that virtue is naturally the interest or happiness, and vice the misery, of such a creature as man, placed in the circumstances which we are in this world. But



suppose there are particular exceptions; a case which this author was unwilling to put, and yet surely it is to be put: or suppose a case which he has put and determined, that of a sceptic not convinced of this happy tendency of virtue, or being of a contrary opinion. His determination is, that it would be *without remedy*\*. One may say more explicitly, that leaving out the authority of reflex approbation or disapprobation, such a one would be under an obligation to act viciously; since interest, one's own happiness, is a manifest obligation, and there is not supposed to be any other obligation in the case. 'But does it much mend the matter, to take in that natural authority of reflection? There indeed would be an obligation to virtue; but would not the obligation from supposed interest on the side of vice remain?' If it should, yet to be under two contrary obligations, i.e. under none at all, would not be exactly the same, as to be under a formal obligation to be vicious, or to be in circumstances in which the constitution of man's nature plainly required that vice should be preferred. But the obligation on the side of interest really does not remain. For the natural authority of the principle of reflection is an obligation the most near and intimate, the most certain and known: whereas the contrary obligation can at the utmost appear no more

\* Characteristics, Vol. II. p. 69.

than probable; since no man can be *certain* in any circumstances that vice is his interest in the present world, much less can he be certain against another: and thus the certain obligation would entirely supersede and destroy the uncertain one; which yet would have been of real force without the former.

In truth, the taking in this consideration totally changes the whole state of the case; and shews, what this author does not seem to have been aware of, that the greatest degree of scepticism which he thought possible will still leave men under the strictest moral obligations, whatever their opinion be concerning the happiness of virtue. For that mankind upon reflection felt an approbation of what was good, and disapprobation of the contrary, he thought a plain matter of fact, as it undoubtedly is, which none could deny, but from mere affectation. Take in then that authority and obligation, which is a constituent part of this reflex approbation, and it will undeniably follow, though a man should doubt of every thing else, yet, that he would still remain under the nearest and most certain obligation to the practice of virtue; an obligation implied in the very idea of *virtue*, in the very idea of *reflex approbation*.

And how little influence soever this obligation alone can be expected to have in fact upon mankind, yet one may appeal even to interest

and self-love, and ask, since from man's nature, condition, and the shortness of life, so little, so very little indeed, can possibly in any case be gained by vice ; whether it be so prodigious a thing to sacrifice that little to the most intimate of all obligations ; and which a man cannot transgress without being self-condemned, and, unless he has corrupted his nature, without real self-dislike : this question, I say, may be asked, even upon supposition that the prospect of a future life were ever so uncertain.

The observation, that man is thus by his very nature a law to himself, pursued to its just consequences, is of the utmost importance ; because from it it will follow, that though men should, through stupidity or speculative scepticism, be ignorant of, or disbelieve, any authority in the universe to punish the violation of this law ; yet, if there should be such authority, they would be as really liable to punishment, as though they had been beforehand convinced, that such punishment would follow. For in whatever sense we understand justice, even supposing, what I think would be very presumptuous to assert, that the end of divine punishment is no other than that of civil punishment, namely, to prevent future mischief ; upon this bold supposition, ignorance or disbelief of the sanction would by no means exempt even from this justice : because it is not foreknowledge of the punishment which

renders us obnoxious to it; but merely violating a known obligation.

And here it comes in one's way to take notice of a manifest error or mistake in the author now cited, unless perhaps he has incautiously expressed himself so as to be misunderstood; namely, that *it is malice only, and not goodness, which can make us afraid*\*. Whereas in reality, goodness is the natural and just object of the greatest fear to an ill man. Malice may be appeased or satiated; humour may change, but goodness is a fixed, steady, immoveable principle of action. If either of the former holds the sword of justice, there is plainly ground for the greatest of crimes to hope for impunity: but if it be goodness, there can be no possible hope, whilst the reasons of things, or the ends of government, call for punishment. Thus every one sees how much greater chance of impunity an ill man has in a partial administration, than in a just and upright one. It is said, that *the interest or good of the whole must be the interest of the universal Being, and that he can have no other*. Be it so. This author has proved, that vice is naturally the misery of mankind in this world. Consequently it was for the good of the whole that it should be so. What shadow of reason then is there to assert, that this may not be the case hereafter? Danger of future punishment

\* Charact. Vol. i. p. 39.

(and if there be danger, there is ground of fear) no more supposes malice, than the present feeling of punishment does.

\*(VII, X.) The Sermon *upon the Character of Balaam*, and that *upon Self-Deceit*, both relate to one subject. I am persuaded, that a very great part of the wickedness of the world is, one way or other, owing to the self-partiality self-flattery, and self-deceit, endeavoured there to be laid open and explained. It is to be observed amongst persons of the lowest rank, in proportion to their compass of thought, as much as amongst men of education and improvement. It seems, that people are capable of being thus artful with themselves, in proportion as they are capable of being so with others. Those who have taken notice that there is really such a thing, namely, plain falseness and insincerity in men with regard to themselves, will readily see the drift and design of these Discourses: and nothing that I can add will explain the design of them to him, who has not beforehand remarked, at least, somewhat of the character. And yet the admonitions they contain may be as much wanted by such a person, as by others; for it is, to be noted, that a man may be entirely possessed by this unfairness of mind, without having the least speculative notion what the thing is.

\* [Sermon iv. is *Upon the Government of the Tongue*: Sermon v. and vi. *Upon Compassion*. W.]

(VIII.) The account given of *Resentment* in the eighth Sermon is introductory to the following one upon *Forgiveness of Injuries*. It may possibly have appeared to some, at first sight, a strange assertion, that injury is the only natural object of settled resentment, or that men do not in fact resent deliberately any thing but under this appearance of injury. But I must desire the reader not to take any assertion alone by itself, but to consider the whole of what is said upon it: because this is necessary, not only in order to judge of the truth of it, but often, such is the nature of language, to see the very meaning of the assertion. Particularly as to this, injury and injustice is, in the Sermon itself, explained to mean, not only the more gross and shocking instances of wickedness, but also contempt, scorn, neglect, any sort of disagreeable behaviour towards a person, which he thinks other than what is due to him. And the general notion of injury or wrong plainly comprehends this, though the words are mostly confined to the higher degrees of it.

(IX.) Forgiveness of injuries is one of the very few moral obligations which has been disputed. But the proof, that it is really an obligation, what our nature and condition require, seems very obvious, were it only from the consideration, that revenge is doing harm merely for harm's sake. And as to the love of our enemies:

resentment cannot supersede the obligation to universal benevolence, unless they are in the nature of the thing inconsistent, which they plainly are not\*.

This divine precept, to forgive injuries and love our enemies, though to be met with in Gentile moralists, yet is in a peculiar sense a precept of Christianity; as our Saviour has insisted more upon it than upon any other single virtue. One reason of this doubtless is, that it so peculiarly becomes an imperfect, faulty creature. But it may be observed also that a virtuous temper of mind, consciousness of innocence, and good meaning towards every body, and a strong feeling of injustice and injury, may itself, such is the imperfection of our virtue, lead a person to violate this obligation, if he be not upon his guard. And it may well be supposed, that this is another reason why it is so much insisted upon by him, who *knew what was in man*.

(XI, XII.) The chief design of the eleventh Discourse is to state the notion of self-love and disinterestedness, in order to shew that benevolence is not more unfriendly to self-love, than any other particular affection whatever. There is a strange affectation in many people of explaining away all particular affections, and representing the whole of life as nothing but one continued exercise of self-love. Hence arises that surpris-

\* See the Sermon.

ing confusion and perplexity in the Epicureans\* of old, Hobbes, the author of *Reflections, Sentences, et Maximes Morales*, and this whole set of writers; the confusion of calling actions *interested* which are done in contradiction to the most manifest known interest, merely for the gratification of a present passion. Now all this confusion might easily be avoided, by stating to ourselves wherein the idea of self-love in general consists, as distinguished from all particular movements towards particular external objects; the appetites of sense, resentment, compassion, curiosity, ambition, and the rest†. When this is done, if the words *selfish* and *interested* cannot be parted with, but must be applied to every thing; yet, to avoid such total confusion of all language, let the distinction be made by epithets: and the first may be called *cool* or *settled selfishness*, and the other *passionate* or *sensual selfishness*. But the most natural way of speaking

\* One need only look into Torquatus's account of the Epicurean system, in Cicero's first book *De Finibus*, to see in what a surprising manner this was done by them. Thus the desire of praise, and of being beloved, he explains to be no other than desire of safety: regard to our country, even in the most virtuous character, to be nothing but regard to ourselves. The author of *Reflections, &c. Morales*, says, Curiosity proceeds from interest or pride; which pride also would doubtless have been explained to be self-love. Page 85. ed. 1725. As if there were no such passions in mankind as desire of esteem, or of being beloved, or of knowledge. Hobbes's account of the affections of good-will and pity are instances of the same kind.

† See the Sermon.



plainly is, to call the first only, *self-love*, and the actions proceeding from it, interested: and to say of the latter, that they are not love to ourselves, but movements towards somewhat external: honour, power, the harm or good of another: and that the pursuit of these external objects, so far as it proceeds from these movements (for it may proceed from self-love\*), is no otherwise interested, than as every action of every creature must, from the nature of the thing, be; for no one can act but from a desire, or choice, or preference of his own.

Self-love and any particular passion may be joined together; and from this complication, it becomes impossible in numberless instances to determine precisely, how far an action, perhaps even of one's own, has for its principle general self-love, or some particular passion. But this need create no confusion in the ideas themselves of self-love and particular passions. We distinctly discern what one is, and what the other are: though we may be uncertain how far one or the other influences us. And though, from this uncertainty, it cannot but be that there will be different opinions concerning mankind, as more or less governed by interest; and some will ascribe actions to self-love, which others will ascribe to particular passions: yet it is absurd to say that mankind are wholly actuated by

\* See the Note, Art. [5].

either; since it is manifest that both have their influence. For as, on the one hand, men form a general notion of interest, some placing it in one thing, and some in another, and have a considerable regard to it throughout the course of their life, which is owing to self-love; so, on the other hand, they are often set on work by the particular passions themselves, and a considerable part of life is spent in the actual gratification of them, *i.e.* is employed, not by self-love, but by the passions.

Besides, the very idea of an interested pursuit necessarily presupposes particular passions or appetites; since the very idea of interest or happiness consists in this, that an appetite or affection enjoys its object. It is not because we love ourselves that we find delight in such and such objects, but because we have particular affections towards them. Take away these affections, and you leave self-love absolutely nothing at all to employ itself about\*; no end or object for it to pursue, excepting only that of avoiding pain. Indeed the Epicureans, who maintained that absence of pain was the highest happiness, might, consistently with themselves, deny all affection, and, if they had so pleased, every sensual appetite too: but the very idea of interest or happiness other than absence of pain, implies

\* See Sermon XI.

particular appetites or passions ; these being necessary to constitute that interest or happiness.

The observation, that benevolence is no more disinterested than any of the common particular passions \* seems in itself worth being taken notice of ; but is insisted upon to obviate that scorn, which one sees rising upon the faces of people who are said to know the world, when mention is made of a disinterested, generous, or public-spirited action. The truth of that observation might be made appear in a more formal manner of proof : for whoever will consider all the possible respects and relations which any particular affection can have to self-love and private interest, will, I think, see demonstrably, that benevolence is not in any respect more at variance with self-love, than any other particular affection whatever, but that it is in every respect, at least, as friendly to it.

If the observation be true, it follows, that self-love and benevolence, virtue and interest, are not to be opposed, but only to be distinguished from each other ; in the same way as virtue and any other particular affection, love of arts, suppose, are to be distinguished. Every thing is what it is, and not another thing. The goodness or badness of actions does not arise from hence, that the epithet,

\* See Sermon xi.

*interested* or *disinterested*, may be applied to them, any more than that any other indifferent epithet, suppose *inquisitive* or *jealous*, may or may not be applied to them; not from their being attended with present or future pleasure or pain; but from their being what they are; namely, what becomes such creatures as we are, what the state of the case requires, or the contrary. Or in other words, we may judge and determine, that an action is morally good or evil, before we so much as consider, whether it be interested or disinterested. This consideration no more comes in to determine whether an action be virtuous, than to determine whether it be resentful. Self-love in its due degree is as just and morally good, as any affection whatever. Benevolence towards particular persons may be to a degree of weakness, and so be blameable: and disinterestedness is so far from being in itself commendable, that the utmost possible depravity which we can in imagination conceive, is that of disinterested cruelty.

Neither does there appear any reason to wish self-love were weaker in the generality of the world than it is. The influence which it has seems plainly owing to its being constant and habitual, which it cannot but be, and not to the degree or strength of it. Every caprice of the imagination, every curiosity of

the understanding, every affection of the heart, is perpetually shewing its weakness, by prevailing over it. Men daily, hourly sacrifice the greatest known interest, to fancy, inquisitiveness, love, or hatred, any vagrant inclination. The thing to be lamented is, not that men have so great regard to their own good or interest in the present world, for they have not enough\*; but that they have so little to the good of others. And this seems plainly owing to their being so much engaged in the gratification of particular passions unfriendly to benevolence, and which happen to be most prevalent in them, much more than to self-love. As a proof of this may be observed, that there is no character more void of friendship, gratitude, natural affection, love to their country, common justice, or more equally and uniformly hardhearted, than the *abandoned* in, what is called, the way of pleasure—hardhearted and totally without feeling in behalf of others; except when they cannot escape the sight of distress, and so are interrupted by it in their pleasures. And yet it is ridiculous to call such an abandoned course of pleasure *interested*, when the person engaged in it knows beforehand, and goes on under the feeling and apprehension, that it will be as ruinous to himself, as to those who depend upon him.

\* Art. [21].

Upon the whole, if the generality of mankind were to cultivate within themselves the principle of self-love ; if they were to accustom themselves often to set down and consider, what was the greatest happiness they were capable of attaining for themselves in this life, and if self-love were so strong and prevalent, as that they would uniformly pursue this their supposed chief temporal good, without being diverted from it by any particular passion ; it would manifestly prevent numberless follies and vices. This was in a great measure the Epicurean system of philosophy. It is indeed by no means the religious or even moral institution of life. Yet, with all the mistakes men would fall into about interest, it would be less mischievous than the extravagances of mere appetite, will, and pleasure : for certainly self-love, though confined to the interest of this life, is, of the two, a much better guide than passion\*, which has absolutely no bound nor measure, but what is set to it by this self-love, or moral considerations.

From the distinction above made between self-love, and the several particular principles or affections in our nature, we may see how good ground there was for that assertion, maintained by the several ancient schools of

\* Art. [47].

philosophy against the Epicureans, namely, that virtue is to be pursued as an end, eligible in and for itself. For, if there be any principles or affections in the mind of man distinct from self-love, that the things those principles tend towards, or that the objects of those affections are, each of them, in themselves eligible, to be pursued upon its own account, and to be rested in as an end, is implied in the very idea of such principle or affection\*. They indeed asserted much higher things of virtue, and with very good reason; but to say thus much of it, that it is to be pursued for itself, is to say no more of it, than may truly be said of the object of every natural affection whatever.

(XIII, XIV.) The question, which was a few years ago disputed in France, concerning *the love of God*, which was there called *enthusiasm*, as it will every where by the generality of the world; this question, I say, answers in religion to that old one in morals now mentioned. And both of them are, I think, fully determined by the same observation, namely, that the very nature of affection, the idea itself, necessarily implies resting in its object as an end.

I shall not here add any thing further to what I have said in the two Discourses upon

\* Sermon XII.

that most important subject, but only this: that if we are constituted such sort of creatures, as from our very nature to feel certain affections or movements of mind, upon the sight or contemplation of the meanest inanimate part of the creation, for the flowers of the field have their beauty; certainly there must be somewhat due to him himself, who is the Author and Cause of all things; who is more intimately present to us than any thing else can be, and with whom we have a nearer and more constant intercourse, than we can have with any creature: there must be some movements of mind and heart which correspond to his perfections, or of which those perfections are the natural object: and that when we are commanded to *love the Lord our God with all our heart, and with all our mind, and with all our soul*; somewhat more must be meant than merely that we live in hope of rewards or fear of punishments from him; somewhat more than this must be intended: though these regards themselves are most just and reasonable, and absolutely necessary to be often recollected in such a world as this.

It may be proper just to advertise the reader, that he is not to look for any particular reason for the choice of the greatest part of these Discourses; their being taken from amongst many others, preached in the



same place, through a course of eight years, being in great measure accidental. Neither is he to expect to find any other connexion between them, than that uniformity of thought and design, which will always be found in the writings of the same person, when he writes with simplicity and in earnest.

STANHOPE, *Sept.* 16, 1729.



# UPON HUMAN NATURE.

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## SERMON I.

[MAN'S NATURE INCLUDES PRINCIPLES WHICH  
TEND TO THE GOOD OF SOCIETY.]

ROMANS XII. 4, 5.

*For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: so we being many are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.*

[1] **T**HE epistles in the New Testament have all of them a particular reference to the condition and usages of the Christian world at the time they were written. Therefore, as they cannot be thoroughly understood unless that condition and those usages are known and attended to; so, further, though they be known, yet, if they be discontinued or changed, exhortations, precepts, and illustrations of things, which refer to such circumstances now ceased or altered, cannot at this time be urged in that manner, and with that force, which they were to the primitive Christians. Thus the text now before us, in its first intent and design, relates to the decent management of those extraordi-

nary gifts which were then in the church\*, but which are now totally ceased. And even as to the allusion, that “we are one body in Christ,” though what the apostle here intends is equally true of Christians in all circumstances; and the consideration of it is plainly still an additional motive, over and above moral considerations, to the discharge of the several duties and offices of a Christian; yet it is manifest this allusion must have appeared with much greater force to those, who, by the many difficulties they went through for the sake of their religion, were led to keep always in view the relation they stood in to their Saviour, who had undergone the same; to those who, from the idolatries of all around them, and their ill-treatment, were taught to consider themselves as not of the world in which they live, but as a distinct society of themselves; with laws, and ends, and principles of life and action, quite contrary to those which the world professed themselves at that time influenced by. Hence the relation of a Christian was by them considered as nearer that of affinity and blood; and they almost literally esteemed themselves as members one of another.

It cannot indeed possibly be denied, that our being God’s creatures, and virtue being the natural law we are born under, and the whole

\* 1 Cor. xii.

constitution of man being plainly adapted to it, are prior obligations to piety and virtue, than the consideration that God sent his Son into the world to save it, and the motives which arise from the peculiar relation of Christians, as members one of another, under Christ our head. However, though all this be allowed, as it expressly is by the inspired writers, yet it is manifest that Christians, at the time of the revelation, and immediately after, could not but insist mostly upon considerations of this latter kind.

These observations shew the original particular reference of the text; and the peculiar force with which the thing intended by the allusion in it, must have been felt by the primitive Christian world. They likewise afford a reason for treating it at this time in a more general way.

[2] The relation which the several parts or members of the natural body have to each other, and to the whole body, is here compared to the relation which each particular person in society has to other particular persons, and to the whole society; and the latter is intended to be illustrated by the former. And if there be a likeness between these two relations, the consequence is obvious: that the latter shews us we were intended to do good to others, as the former shews us that the several members of the natural body were intended to be instruments of good to each other, and to the whole body.

But as there is scarce any ground for a comparison between society and the mere material body, this, without the mind, being a dead, inactive thing; much less can the comparison be carried to any length. And since the apostle speaks of the several members as having distinct offices, which implies the mind, it cannot be thought an unallowable liberty, instead of the *body* and *its members*, to substitute the *whole nature of man*, and *all the variety of internal principles which belong to it*. And then the comparison will be between the nature of man as respecting self, and tending to private good, his own preservation and happiness; and the nature of man as having respect to society, and tending to promote public good, the happiness of that society. These ends do indeed perfectly coincide; and to aim at public and private good are so far from being inconsistent, that they mutually promote each other: yet, in the following discourse they must be considered as entirely distinct; otherwise, the nature of man, as tending to one, or as tending to the other, cannot be compared. There can no comparison be made without considering the things compared as distinct and different.

From this review and comparison of the nature of man as respecting self, and as respecting society, it will plainly appear, *that there are as real and the same kind of indications*

*in human nature, that we were made for society and to do good to our fellow-creatures, as that we were intended to take care of our own life, and health, and private good; and that the same objections lie against one of these assertions as against the other.* For,

[3] *First*, There is a natural principle of *benevolence*\* in man, which is in some degree

\* Suppose a man of learning to be writing a grave book upon *human nature*, and to shew in several parts of it that he had an insight into the subject he was considering: amongst other things, the following one would require to be accounted for; the appearance of benevolence or good-will in men towards each other in the instances of natural relation, and in others<sup>1</sup>.

[a] Cautious of being deceived with outward show, he retires within himself, to see exactly what that is in the mind of man from whence this appearance proceeds; and, upon deep reflection, asserts the principle in the mind to be only the love of power, and delight in the exercise of it. Would not every body think here was a mistake of one word for another? That the philosopher was contemplating and accounting for some other *human actions*, some other behaviour of man to man?

[b] And could any one be thoroughly satisfied, that what is commonly called benevolence or good-will was really the affection meant, but only by being made to understand that this learned person had a general hypothesis, to which the appearance of good-will could no otherwise be reconciled? That what has this appearance is often nothing but ambition; that delight in superiority often (suppose always) mixes itself with benevolence, only makes it more specious to call it ambition than hunger, of the two: but in reality that passion [ambition] does no more account for the whole appearance of good-will, than this appetite [hunger] does.

[c] Is there not often the appearance of one man's wishing that good to another, which he knows himself unable to

<sup>1</sup> Hobbes of Human Nature, c. ix. § 17.

to *society* what *self-love* is to the *individual*. And if there be in mankind any disposition to

procure him; and rejoicing in it, though bestowed by a third person? And can love of power any way possibly come in to account for this desire or delight?

Is there not often the appearance of men's distinguishing between two or more persons, preferring one before another, to do good to, in cases where love of power cannot in the least account for the distinction and preference? For this principle can no otherwise distinguish between objects, than as it is a greater instance and exertion of power to do good to one rather than to another.

[*d*] Again: suppose good-will in the mind of man to be nothing but delight in the exercise of power: men might indeed be restrained by distant and accidental considerations; but these restraints being removed, they would have a disposition to, and delight in mischief, as an exercise and proof of power: and this disposition and delight would arise from, or be the same principle in the mind, as a disposition to, and delight in charity. Thus cruelty, as distinct from envy and resentment, would be exactly the same in the mind of man as good-will: that one tends to the happiness, the other to the misery of our fellow-creatures, is, it seems, merely an accidental circumstance, which the mind has not the least regard to.

These are the absurdities which even men of capacity run into, when they have occasion to belie their nature, and will perversely disclaim that image of God which was originally stamped upon it; the traces of which, however faint, are plainly discernible upon the mind of man.

[*e*] If any person can in earnest doubt, whether there be such a thing as good-will in one man towards another; (for the question is not concerning either the degree or extensiveness of it, but concerning the affection itself;) let it be observed, that *whether man be thus, or otherwise constituted, what is the inward frame in this particular*, is a mere question of fact or natural history, not proveable immediately by reason.

It is therefore to be judged of and determined in the same way other facts or matters of natural history are: by appealing to the external senses, or inward perceptions, respectively, as the matter under consideration is cognizable



friendship; if there be any such thing as compassion, for compassion is momentary love; if there be any such thing as the paternal or filial affections; if there be any affection in human nature, the object and end of which is the good of another; this is itself benevolence, or the love of another. Be it ever so short, be it in ever so low a degree, or ever so unhappily confined; it proves the assertion, and points out what we were designed for, as really as though it were in a higher degree and more extensive.

[4] I must however remind you, that though benevolence and self-love are different; though the former tends most directly to public good, and the latter to private; yet they are so per-

by one or the other: by arguing from acknowledged facts and actions; for a great number of actions of the same kind, in different circumstances, and respecting different objects, will prove, to a certainty, what principles they do not, and, to the greatest probability, what principles they do proceed from: and, lastly, by the testimony of mankind.

[f] Now, that there is some degree of benevolence amongst men, may be as strongly and plainly proved in all these ways, as it could possibly be proved, supposing there was this affection in our nature. And should any one think fit to assert, that resentment in the mind of man was absolutely nothing but reasonable concern for our own safety, the falsity of this, and what is the real nature of that passion, could be shewn in no other ways than those in which it may be shewn, that there is such a thing in *some degree* as *real* good-will in man towards man.

It is sufficient that the seeds of it be implanted in our nature by God. There is, it is owned, much left for us to do upon our own heart and temper; to cultivate, to improve, to call it forth, to exercise it in a steady, uniform manner. This is our work: this is virtue and religion.

fectly coincident, that the greatest satisfactions to ourselves depend upon our having benevolence in a due degree; and that self-love is one chief security of our right behaviour towards society. It may be added, that their mutual coinciding, so that we can scarce promote one without the other, is equally a proof that we were made for both.

[5] *Secondly.* This will further appear from observing, that the *several passions and affections*, which are distinct\* both from bene-

\* Every body makes a distinction between self-love, and the several particular passions, appetites, and affections; and yet they are often confounded again. That they are totally different, will be seen by any one who will distinguish between the passions and appetites *themselves*, and *endeavouring* after the means of their gratification.

[a] Consider the appetite of hunger, and the desire of esteem: these being the occasion both of pleasure and pain, the coolest *self-love*, as well as the appetites and passions themselves, may put us upon making use of the *proper methods of obtaining* that pleasure [esteem], and avoiding that pain [hunger]; but the *feelings themselves*, the pain of hunger and shame, and the delight [from food and] from esteem, are no more self-love than they are any thing in the world. Though a man hated himself, he would as much feel the pain of hunger as he would that of the gout: and it is plainly supposable, there may be creatures with self-love in them to the highest degree, who may be quite insensible and indifferent (as men in some cases are) to the contempt and esteem of those, upon whom their happiness does not in some further respects depend.

And as self-love and the several particular passions and appetites are in themselves totally different; so that some actions proceed from one, and some from the other, will be manifest to any who will observe the two following very supposable cases:—

[b] One man rushes upon certain ruin for the gratifica-

volence and self-love, do in general contribute and lead us to *public* good as really as to *private*.

[6] It might be thought too minute and particular, and would carry us too great a length, to distinguish between and compare together the several passions or appetites distinct from benevolence, whose primary use and intention is the security and good of society; and the passions distinct from self-love, whose primary intention and design is the security and good of the individual\*.

tion of a present desire: nobody will call the principle of this action self-love. Suppose another man to go through some laborious work, upon promise of a great reward, without any distinct knowledge what the reward will be: this course of action cannot be ascribed to any particular passion.

The former of these actions is plainly to be imputed to some particular passion or affection, the latter as plainly to the general affection or principle of self-love.

That there are some particular pursuits or actions concerning which we cannot determine how far they are owing to one, and how far to the other, proceeds from this, that the two principles are frequently mixed together, and run into each other.

\* If any desire to see this distinction and comparison made in a particular instance, the appetite and passion now mentioned may serve for one. Hunger is to be considered as a private appetite; because the end for which it was given us is the preservation of the individual. Desire of esteem is a public passion; because the end for which it was given us is to regulate our behaviour towards society. The respect which this has to private good is as remote as the respect which that has to public good; and the appetite is no more self-love, than the passion is benevolence. The object and end of the former is merely food; the object and end of the latter is merely esteem: but the latter can

[7] It is enough to the present argument, that desire of esteem from others, contempt and esteem of them, love of society as distinct from affection to the good of it, indignation against successful vice, that these are public affections or passions; have an immediate respect to others, naturally lead us to regulate our behaviour in such a manner as will be of service to our fellow-creatures. If any or all of these may be considered likewise as private affections, as tending to private good; this does not hinder them from being public affections too, or destroy the good influence of them upon society, and their tendency to public good.

[3] It may be added, that as persons without any conviction from reason of the desirableness of life, would yet of course preserve it merely from the appetite of hunger; so, by acting merely from regard (suppose) to reputation, without any consideration of the good of others, men often contribute to public good. In both these instances they are plainly instruments in the hands of another, in the hands of Providence, to carry on ends, the preservation of the individual and good of society, which they themselves have not in their view or intention.

no more be gratified, without contributing to the good of society, than the former can be gratified, without contributing to the preservation of the individual.

[9] The sum is, men have various appetites, passions, and particular affections, quite distinct both from self-love and from benevolence; all of these have a tendency to promote both public and private good, and may be considered as respecting others and ourselves equally and in common: but some of them seem most immediately to respect others, or tend to public good: others of them most immediately to respect self, or tend to private good: as the former are not benevolence, so the latter are not self-love; neither sort are instances of our love either to ourselves or others, but only instances of our Maker's care and love both of the individual and the species, and proofs that He intended we should be instruments of good to each other, as well as that we should be so to ourselves.

[10] *Thirdly*, There is a principle of reflection in men, by which they distinguish between, approve and disapprove their own actions. We are plainly constituted such sort of creatures as to reflect upon our own nature. The mind can take a view of what passes within itself, its propensions, aversions, passions, affections, as respecting such objects, and in such degrees, and of the several actions consequent thereupon. In this survey it approves of one, disapproves of another, and towards a third is affected in neither of these ways, but is quite

indifferent. This principle in man, by which he approves or disapproves his heart, temper, and actions, is *conscience*; for this is the strict sense of the word, though sometimes it is used so as to take in more.

[11] And that this faculty tends to restrain men from doing mischief to each other, and leads them to do good, is too manifest to need being insisted upon. Thus, a parent has the affection of love to his children: this leads him to take care of, to educate, to make due provision for them; the natural affection leads to this: but the reflection that it is his proper business, what belongs to him, that it is right and commendable so to do; this, added to the affection, becomes a much more settled principle, and carries him on through more labour and difficulties for the sake of his children, than he would undergo from that affection alone; if he thought it, and the course of action it led to, either indifferent or criminal.

[12] This indeed is impossible, to do that which is good, and not to approve of it; for which reason they are frequently not considered as distinct, though they really are: for men often approve of the actions of others, which they will not imitate, and likewise do that which they approve not.

[13] It cannot possibly be denied, that there is this principle of reflection or conscience in

human nature. Suppose a man to relieve an innocent person in great distress; suppose the same man afterwards, in the fury of anger, to do the greatest mischief to a person who had given no just cause of offence; to aggravate the injury, add the circumstances of former friendship, and obligation from the injured person: let the man who is supposed to have done these two different actions, coolly reflect upon them afterwards, without regard to their consequences to himself; to assert that any common man would be affected in the same way towards these different actions, that he would make no distinction between them, but approve or disapprove them equally, is too glaring a falsity to need being confuted. There is therefore this principle of reflection or conscience in mankind.

[14] It is needless to compare the respect it has to private good, with the respect it has to public; since it plainly tends as much to the latter as to the former, and is commonly thought to tend chiefly to the latter. This faculty is now mentioned merely as another part in the inward frame of man, pointing out to us in some degree what we are intended for, and as what will naturally and of course have some influence. The particular place assigned to it by nature, what authority it has, and how great influence it ought to have, shall be hereafter considered.

[15] From this comparison of benevolence

and self-love, of our public and private affections, of the courses of life they lead to, and of the principle of reflection or conscience as respecting each of them, it is as manifest, that *we were made for society, and to promote the happiness of it; as that we were intended to take care of our own life, and health, and private good.*

[16] And from this whole review must be given a different draught of human nature from what we are often presented with. Mankind are by nature so closely united, there is such a correspondence between the inward sensations of one man and those of another, that disgrace is as much avoided as bodily pain, and to be the object of esteem and love as much desired as any external goods: and, in many particular cases, persons are carried on to do good to others, as the end their affection tends to, and rests in; and manifest that they find real satisfaction and enjoyment in this course of behaviour. There is such a natural principle of attraction in man towards man, that having trod the same tract of land, having breathed in the same climate, barely having been born in the same artificial district or division, becomes the occasion of contracting acquaintances and familiarities many years after: for any thing may serve the purpose. Thus relations, merely nominal, are sought and invented, not by governors,



but by the lowest of the people; which are found sufficient to hold mankind together in little fraternities and copartnerships: weak ties, indeed, and what may afford fund enough for ridicule, if they are absurdly considered as the real principles of that union; but they are, in truth, merely the occasions, as any thing may be of any thing, upon which our nature carries us on according to its own previous bent and bias; which occasions, therefore, would be nothing at all, were there not this prior disposition and bias of nature. Men are so much one body, that in a peculiar manner they feel for each other, shame, sudden danger, resentment, honour, prosperity, distress; one or other, or all of these, from the social nature in general, from benevolence, upon the occasion of natural relation, acquaintance, protection, dependence; each of these being distinct cements of society. And, therefore, to have no restraint from, no regard to others in our behaviour, is the speculative absurdity of considering ourselves as single and independent, as having nothing in our nature which has respect to our fellow-creatures, reduced to action and practice. And this is the same absurdity as to suppose a hand, or any part, to have no natural respect to any other, or to the whole body.

[17] But allowing all this, it may be asked, "Has not man dispositions and principles with-

in, which lead him to do evil to others, as well as to do good? whence come the many miseries else, which men are the authors and instruments of to each other?"

[18] These questions, so far as they relate to the foregoing discourse, may be answered by asking, "Has not man also dispositions and principles within, which lead him to do evil to himself as well as good? whence come the many miseries else, sickness, pain, and death, which men are the instruments and authors of to themselves?"

[19] It may be thought more easy to answer one of these questions than the other, but the answer to both is really the same: that mankind have ungoverned passions which they will gratify at any rate, as well to the injury of others, as in contradiction to known private interest: but that as there is no such thing as self-hatred, so neither is there any such thing as ill-will in one man towards another, emulation and resentment being away; whereas there is plainly benevolence or good-will; there is no such thing as love of injustice, oppression, treachery, ingratitude; but only eager desires after such and such external goods; which, according to a very ancient observation, the most abandoned would choose to obtain by innocent means, if they were as easy and as effectual to their end: that even emulation and resentment, by any

one who will consider what these passions really are in nature\*, will be found nothing to the purpose of this objection; and that the principles and passions in the mind of man, which are distinct both from self-love and benevolence, primarily and most directly lead to right behaviour with regard to others as well as himself, and only secondarily and accidentally to what is evil. Thus, though men, to avoid the shame of one villany, are sometimes guilty of a greater, yet it is easy to see, that the original tendency of shame is to prevent the doing of shameful actions; and its leading men to conceal such actions when done, is only in consequence of their being done; *i. e.* of the passion's not having answered its first end.

[20] If it be said, that there are persons in the world, who are, in great measure, without the natural affections towards their fellow-creatures; there are likewise instances of per-

\* Emulation is merely the desire and hope of equality with, or superiority over others, with whom we compare ourselves. There does not appear to be any *other grief* in the natural passion, but only *that want* which is implied in desire. However, this may be so strong as to be the occasion of great *grief*. To desire the attainment of this equality, or superiority, by the *particular means* of others being brought down to our own level, or below it, is, I think, the distinct notion of envy. From whence it is easy to see that the real end, which the natural passion, emulation, and which the unlawful one, envy, aims at, is exactly the same; namely, that equality or superiority: and, consequently, that to do mischief is not the end of envy, but merely the means it makes use of to attain its end.

sons without the common natural affections to themselves: but the nature of man is not to be judged by either of these, but by what appears in the common world, in the bulk of mankind.

[21] I am afraid it would be thought very strange, if, to confirm the truth of this account of human nature, and make out the justness of the foregoing comparison, it should be added, that from what appears, men, in fact, as much and as often contradict that *part* of their nature which respects *self*, and which leads them to their *own private* good and happiness, as they contradict that *part* of it which respects *society*, and tends to *public* good: that there are as few persons, who attain the greatest satisfaction and enjoyment which they might attain in the present world, as who do the greatest good to others which they might do; nay, that there are as few who can be said really and in earnest to aim at one, as at the other.

Take a survey of mankind: the world in general, the good and bad, almost without exception, equally are agreed, that were religion out of the case, the happiness of the present life would consist in a manner wholly in riches, honours, sensual gratifications; insomuch that one scarce hears a reflection made upon prudence, life, conduct, but upon this supposition.

Yet, on the contrary, that persons in the greatest affluence of fortune are no happier

than such as have only a competency; that the cares and disappointments of ambition for the most part far exceed the satisfactions of it; as also the miserable intervals of intemperance and excess, and the many untimely deaths occasioned by a dissolute course of life: these things are all seen, acknowledged, by every one acknowledged; but are thought no objections against, though they expressly contradict this universal principle, that the happiness of the present life consists in one or other of them.

Whence is all this absurdity and contradiction? Is not the middle way obvious? Can any thing be more manifest, than that the happiness of life consists in these, possessed and enjoyed only to a certain degree; that to pursue them beyond this degree, is always attended with more inconvenience than advantage, to a man's self, and often with extreme misery and unhappiness?

Whence then, I say, is all this absurdity and contradiction? Is it really the result of consideration in mankind, how they may become most easy to themselves, most free from care, and enjoy the chief happiness attainable in this world? or is it not manifestly owing either to this, that they have not cool and reasonable concern enough for themselves to consider wherein their chief happiness in the

present life consists; or else, if they do consider it, that they will not act conformably to what is the result of that consideration? *i. e.* reasonable concern for themselves, or cool self-love, is prevailed over by passion and appetite.

So that from what appears, there is no ground to assert, that those principles in the nature of man, which most directly lead to promote the good of our fellow-creatures, are more generally or in a greater degree violated, than those which most directly lead us to promote our own private good and happiness.

[22] The sum of the whole is plainly this. The nature of man, considered in his single capacity, and with respect only to the present world, is adapted and leads him to attain the greatest happiness he can for himself in the present world. The nature of man, considered in his public or social capacity, leads him to a right behaviour in society, to that course of life which we call virtue. Men follow or obey their nature in both these capacities and respects to a certain degree, but not entirely: their actions do not come up to the whole of what their nature leads them to in either of these capacities or respects; and they often violate their nature in both: *i. e.* as they neglect the duties they owe to their fellow-creatures, to which their nature leads them;

and are injurious, to which their nature is abhorrent: so there is a manifest negligence in men of their real happiness or interest in the present world, when that interest is inconsistent with a present gratification; for the sake of which they negligently, nay, even knowingly, are the authors and instruments of their own misery and ruin. Thus they are as often unjust to themselves as to others, and for the most part are equally so to both by the same actions.

## SERMON II.

[CONSCIENCE IS A PRINCIPLE SUPERIOR IN KIND  
TO APPETITES AND DESIRES.]

ROMANS II. 14.

*For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves.*

[23] **A**S speculative truth admits of different kinds of proof, so likewise moral obligations may be shewn by different methods. If the real nature of any creature leads him and is adapted to such and such purposes only, or more than to any other; this is a reason to believe the Author of that nature intended it for those purposes. Thus there is no doubt the eye was intended for us to see with. And the more complex any constitution is, and the greater variety of parts there are which thus tend to some one end, the stronger is the proof that such end was designed.

[24] However, when the inward frame of man is considered as any guide in morals, the utmost caution must be used that none make



peculiarities in their own temper, or any thing which is the effect of particular customs, though observable in several, the standard of what is common to the species; and, above all, that the highest principle be not forgot or excluded, that to which belongs the adjustment and correction of all other inward movements and affections: which principle will of course have some influence, but which, being in nature supreme, as shall now be shewn, ought to preside over and govern all the rest.

The difficulty of rightly observing the two former cautions; the appearance there is of some small diversity amongst mankind with respect to this faculty, with respect to their natural sense of moral good and evil; and the attention necessary to survey with any exactness what passes within, have occasioned that it is not so much agreed what is the standard of the internal nature of man, as of his external form. Neither is this last exactly settled. Yet we understand one another when we speak of the shape of a human body; so likewise we do when we speak of the heart and inward principles, how far soever the standard is from being exact or precisely fixed.

There is, therefore, ground for an attempt of shewing men to themselves, of shewing them what course of life and behaviour their real nature points out and would lead them to.

[25] Now, obligations of virtue shewn, and motives to the practice of it enforced, from a review of the nature of man, are to be considered as an appeal to each particular person's heart and natural conscience: as the external senses are appealed to for the proof of things cognizable by them. Since, then, our inward feelings, and the perceptions we receive from our external senses, are equally real; to argue from the former to life and conduct, is as little liable to exception, as to argue from the latter to absolute speculative truth. A man can as little doubt whether his eyes were given him to see with, as he can doubt of the truth of the science of *optics*, deduced from ocular experiments. And allowing the inward feeling, shame; a man can as little doubt whether it was given him to prevent his doing shameful actions, as he can doubt whether his eyes were given him to guide his steps. And as to these inward feelings themselves; that they are real, that man has in his nature passions and affections, can no more be questioned, than that he has external senses. Neither can the former be wholly mistaken, though to a certain degree liable to greater mistakes than the latter.

[26] There can be no doubt but that several propensions or instincts, several principles in the heart of man, carry him to society and

to contribute to the happiness of it, in a sense and a manner in which no inward principle leads him to evil. These principles, propensions, or instincts, which lead him to do good, are approved of by a certain faculty within, quite distinct from these propensions themselves. All this hath been fully made out in the foregoing discourse.

[27] But it may be said, "What is all this, though true, to the purpose of virtue and religion? these require, not only that we do good to others when we are led this way, by benevolence or reflection happening to be stronger than other principles, passions, or appetites; but likewise, that the *whole* character be formed upon thought and reflection; that *every* action be directed by some determinate rule, some other rule than the strength and prevalency of any principle or passion. What sign is there in our nature (for the inquiry is only about what is to be collected from thence) that this was intended by its Author? or how does so various and fickle a temper as that of man appear adapted thereto?

"It may indeed be absurd and unnatural for men to act without any reflection; nay, without regard to that particular kind of reflection which you call *conscience*; because this does belong to our nature. For, as there never

was a man but who approved one place, prospect, building, before another; so it does not appear that there ever was a man who would not have approved an action of humanity rather than of cruelty; interest and passion being quite out of the case.

“But interest and passion do come in, and are often too strong for, and prevail over, reflection and conscience. Now, as brutes have various instincts, by which they are carried on to the end the Author of their nature intended them for; is not man in the same condition, with this difference only, that to his instincts (*i.e.* appetites and passions) is added the principle of reflection or conscience? And as brutes act agreeably to their nature, in following that principle or particular instinct which for the present is strongest in them; does not man likewise act agreeably to his nature, or obey the law of his creation, by following that principle, be it passion or conscience, which for the present happens to be strongest in him?

“Thus, different men are by their particular nature hurried on to pursue honour, or riches, or pleasure: there are also persons whose temper leads them in an uncommon degree to kindness, compassion, doing good to their fellow-creatures; as there are others who are given to suspend their judgment, to weigh and

consider things, and to act upon thought and reflection.

“Let every one then quietly follow his nature; as passion, reflection, appetite, the several parts of it, happen to be strongest: but let not the man of virtue take upon him to blame the ambitious, the covetous, the dissolute; since these, equally with him, obey and follow their nature. Thus, as in some cases, we follow our nature in doing the works *contained in the law*, so in other cases we follow nature in doing the contrary.”

[28] Now, all this licentious talk entirely goes upon a supposition, that men follow their nature in the same sense, in violating the known rules of justice and honesty for the sake of a present gratification, as they do in following those rules when they have no temptation to the contrary. And if this were true, that could not be so which St Paul asserts, that men are “by nature a law to themselves.” If by following nature were meant only acting as we please, it would indeed be ridiculous to speak of nature as any guide in morals: nay, the very mention of deviating from nature would be absurd; and the mention of following it, when spoken by way of distinction, would absolutely have no meaning. For, did ever any one act otherwise than as he pleased? And yet the ancients speak of deviating from nature, as vice; and of follow-

ing nature so much as a distinction, that, according to them, the perfection of virtue consists therein. So that language itself should teach people another sense to the words *following nature*, than barely acting as we please.

[29] Let it however be observed, that though the words *human nature* are to be explained, yet the real question of this discourse is not concerning the meaning of words, any otherwise than as the explanation of them may be needful to make out and explain the assertion, that *every man is naturally a law to himself*, that *every one may find within himself the rule of right, and obligations to follow it*. This St Paul affirms in the words of the text, and this the foregoing objection really denies, by seeming to allow it. And the objection will be fully answered, and the text before us explained, by observing, that *nature* is considered in different views, and the word used in different senses; and by shewing in what view it is considered, and in what sense the word is used, when intended to express and signify that which is the guide of life, that by which men are a law to themselves. I say, the explanation of the term will be sufficient, because from thence it will appear, that in some senses of the word, *nature* cannot be, but that in another sense it manifestly is, a law to us.

[30] I. By *nature* is often meant no more

than some principle in man, without regard either to the kind or degree of it. Thus, the passion of anger, and the affection of parents to their children, would be called equally *natural*. And as the same person hath often contrary principles, which at the same time draw contrary ways, he may by the same action both follow and contradict his nature in this sense of the word; he may follow one passion, and contradict another.

II. *Nature* is frequently spoken of as consisting in those passions which are strongest, and most influence the actions; which being vicious ones, mankind is in this sense naturally vicious, or vicious by nature. Thus St Paul says of the Gentiles, *who were dead in trespasses and sins, and walked according to the spirit of disobedience, that they were by nature the children of wrath*\*. They could be no otherwise *children of wrath* by nature, than they were vicious by nature.

Here, then, are two different senses of the word *nature*, in neither of which men can at all be said to be a law to themselves. They are mentioned only to be excluded; to prevent their being confounded, as the latter is in the objection, with another sense of it, which is now to be inquired after and explained.

[31] III. The apostle asserts, that the Gen-

\* Eph. ii. 3.

tiles *do by nature the things contained in the law*. Nature is indeed here put by way of distinction from revelation, but yet it is not a mere negative. He intends to express more than that by which they *did not*, that by which they *did* the works of the law; namely, by *nature*. It is plain the meaning of the word is not the same in this passage as in the former, where it is spoken of as evil; for in this latter it is spoken of as good; as that by which they acted, or might have acted virtuously. What that is in man by which he is *naturally a law to himself*, is explained in the following words:—*which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another.*

[32] If there be a distinction to be made between the *work written in their hearts*, and the *witness of conscience*; by the former must be meant, the natural disposition to kindness and compassion, to do what is of good report, to which this apostle often refers: that part of the nature of man, treated of in the foregoing discourse, which, with very little reflection and of course, leads him to society, and by means of which he naturally acts a just and good part in it, unless other passions or interest lead him astray. Yet since other passions, and regards to private interest, which lead us (though indirectly, yet they lead us) astray, are themselves



in a degree equally natural, and often most prevalent; and since we have no method of seeing the particular degrees in which one or the other is placed in us by nature, it is plain the former, considered merely as natural, good and right as they are, can no more be a law to us than the latter.

[33] But there is a superior principle of reflection or conscience in every man, which distinguishes between the internal principles of his heart, as well as his external actions; which passes judgment upon himself and them; pronounces determinately some actions to be in themselves just, right, good; others to be in themselves evil, wrong, unjust; which without being consulted, without being advised with, magisterially exerts itself, and approves or condemns him, the doer of them, accordingly: and which, if not forcibly stopped, naturally and always of course goes on to anticipate a higher and more effectual sentence, which shall hereafter second and affirm its own. [But this part of the office of conscience is beyond my present design explicitly to consider.] It is by this faculty, natural to man, that he is a moral agent, that he is a law to himself: by this faculty, I say, not to be considered merely as a principle in his heart, which is to have some influence as well as others; but considered as a faculty,

in kind and in nature, supreme over all others, and which bears its own authority of being so.

[34] This *prerogative*, this *natural supremacy*, of the faculty which surveys, approves or disapproves the several affections of our mind, and actions of our lives, being that by which men *are a law to themselves*, their conformity or disobedience to which law of our nature renders their actions, in the highest and most proper sense, natural or unnatural; it is fit it be further explained to you: and I hope it will be so, if you will attend to the following reflections.

[35] Man may act according to that principle or inclination which for the present happens to be strongest, and yet act in a way disproportionate to, and violate his real proper nature. Suppose a brute creature by any bait to be allured into a snare, by which he is destroyed. He plainly followed the bent of his nature, leading him to gratify his appetite: there is an entire correspondence between his whole nature and such an action: such action therefore is natural. But suppose a man, foreseeing the same danger of certain ruin, should rush into it for the sake of a present gratification; he, in this instance, would follow his strongest desire, as did the brute creature: but there would be as manifest a disproportion, between the nature

of a man and such an action, as between the meanest work of art and the skill of the greatest master in that art; which disproportion arises, not from considering the action singly in *itself*, or in its *consequences*, but from *comparison* of it with the nature of the agent. And since such an action is utterly disproportionate to the nature of man, it is in the strictest and most proper sense unnatural; this word expressing that disproportion. Therefore, instead of the words *disproportionate to his nature*, the word *unnatural* may now be put; this being more familiar to us: but let it be observed, that it stands for the same thing precisely.

[36] Now, what is it which renders such a rash action unnatural? Is it that he went against the principle of reasonable and cool self-love, considered *merely* as a part of his nature? No: for if he had acted the contrary way, he would equally have gone against a principle, or part of his nature, namely, passion or appetite. But, to deny a present appetite, from foresight that the gratification of it would end in immediate ruin or extreme misery, is by no means an unnatural action: whereas, to contradict or go against cool self-love, for the sake of such gratification, is so in the instance before us. Such an action then being unnatural, and its being so not arising from a man's going against a principle or desire barely, nor in going against that

principle or desire which happens for the present to be strongest; it necessarily follows, that there must be some other difference, or distinction, to be made between these two principles, passion and cool self-love, than what I have yet taken notice of. And this difference, not being a difference in strength or degree, I call a difference in *nature* and in *kind*.

And since, in the instance still before us, if passion prevails over self-love, the consequent action is unnatural; but if self-love prevails over passion, the action is natural; it is manifest, that self-love is in human nature a superior principle to passion. This may be contradicted without violating that nature, but the former cannot. So that, if we will act conformably to the economy of man's nature, reasonable self-love must govern.

Thus, without particular consideration of conscience, we may have a clear conception of the *superior nature* of one inward principle to another; and see that there really is this natural superiority, quite distinct from degrees of strength and prevalency.

[37] Let us now take a view of the nature of man, as consisting partly of various appetites, passions, affections, and partly of the principle of reflection or conscience, leaving quite out all consideration of the different degrees of strength, in which either of them prevail; and it will fur-

ther appear that there is this natural superiority of one inward principle to another, or that it is even part of the idea of reflection or conscience.

Passion or appetite implies a direct simple tendency towards such and such objects, without distinction of the means by which they are to be obtained. Consequently, it will often happen there will be a desire of particular objects, in cases where they cannot be obtained without manifest injury to others. Reflection or conscience comes in, and disapproves the pursuit of them in these circumstances; but the desire remains. Which is to be obeyed, appetite or reflection? Cannot this question be answered, from the economy and constitution of human nature merely, without saying which is strongest? or need this at all come into consideration? Would not the question be *intelligibly* and fully answered by saying, that the principle of reflection or conscience being compared with the various appetites, passions, and affections in men, the former is manifestly superior and chief, without regard to strength? And how often soever the latter happens to prevail, it is mere *usurpation*. The former remains in nature and in kind its superior; and every instance of such prevalence of the latter, is an instance of breaking in upon and violation of the constitution of man.

[38] All this is no more than the distinction, which every body is acquainted with, between *mere power* and *authority*: only, instead of being intended to express the difference between what is possible, and what is lawful in civil government; here it has been shewn applicable to the several principles in the mind of man. Thus, that principle by which we survey, and either approve or disapprove our own heart, temper and actions, is not only to be considered as what is in its turn to have some influence; which may be said of every passion, of the lowest appetites: but likewise as being superior; as from its very nature manifestly claiming superiority over all others: insomuch that you cannot form a notion of this faculty, conscience, without taking in judgment, direction, superintendency. This is a constituent part of the idea, that is, of the faculty itself: and to preside and govern, from the very economy and constitution of man, belongs to it. Had it strength, as it has right; had it power, as it has manifest authority, it would absolutely govern the world.

[39] This gives us a further view of the nature of man; shews us what course of life we were made for; not only that our real nature leads us to be influenced in some degree by reflection and conscience, but likewise in what degree we are to be influenced by it, if we will

fall in with, and act agreeably to, the constitution of our nature: that this faculty was placed within to be our proper governor; to direct and regulate all under principles, passions, and motives of action. This is its right and office: thus sacred is its authority. And how often soever men violate and rebelliously refuse to submit to it, for supposed interest which they cannot otherwise obtain, or for the sake of passion which they cannot otherwise gratify; this makes no alteration as to the *natural right* and *office* of conscience.

[40] Let us now turn this whole matter another way, and suppose there was no such thing at all as this natural supremacy of conscience; that there was no distinction to be made between one inward principle and another, but only that of strength; and see what would be the consequence.

Consider, then, what is the latitude and compass of the actions of man with regard to himself, his fellow-creatures, and the Supreme Being? What are their bounds, besides that of our natural power? With respect to the two first, they are plainly no other than these: no man seeks misery as such for himself; and no one unprovoked does mischief to another for its own sake. For in every degree within these bounds, mankind knowingly, from passion or wantonness, bring ruin and misery upon themselves and

others. And impiety and profaneness, I mean, what every one would call so who believes the being of God, have absolutely no bounds at all. Men blaspheme the Author of nature, formally and in words renounce their allegiance to their Creator.

Put an instance, then, with respect to any one of these three. Though we should suppose profane swearing, and in general that kind of impiety now mentioned, to mean nothing, yet it implies wanton disregard and irreverence towards an infinite Being, our Creator; and is this as suitable to the nature of man, as reverence and dutiful submission of heart towards that Almighty Being?

Or suppose a man guilty of parricide, with all the circumstances of cruelty which such an action can admit of: this action is done in consequence of its principle being for the present strongest: and if there be no difference between inward principles, but only that of strength; the strength being given, you have the whole nature of the man given, so far as it relates to this matter. The action plainly corresponds to the principle, the principle being in that degree of strength it was: it therefore corresponds to the whole nature of the man. Upon comparing the action and the whole nature, there arises no disproportion, there appears no unsuitableness between them. Thus the *murder of a father*



and the *nature of man* correspond to each other, as the same nature and an act of filial duty. If there be no difference between inward principles, but only that of strength, we can make no distinction between these two actions, considered as the actions of such a creature; but in our coolest hours must approve or disapprove them equally: than which nothing can be reduced to a greater absurdity.

## SERMON III.

[THE SUBJECT CONTINUED.]

[41] **T**HE natural supremacy of reflection or conscience being thus established; we may from it form a distinct notion of what is meant by *human nature*, when virtue is said to consist in following it, and vice in deviating from it.

As the idea of a civil constitution implies in it united strength, various subordinations, under one direction, that of the supreme authority; the different strength of each particular member of the society not coming into the idea; whereas, if you leave out the subordination, the union, and the one direction, you destroy and lose it: so reason, several appetites, passions, and affections, prevailing in different degrees of strength, is not *that* idea or notion of *human nature*; but *that nature* consists in these several principles considered as having a natural respect to each other, in the several passions being naturally subordinate to the one superior principle of reflection or conscience. Every bias,

instinct, propension within, is a real part of our nature, but not the whole: add to these the superior faculty, whose office it is to adjust, manage, and preside over them, and take in this its natural superiority, and you complete the idea of human nature.

And as in civil government the constitution is broken in upon and violated, by power and strength prevailing over authority; so the constitution of man is broken in upon and violated by the lower faculties or principles within prevailing over that which is in its nature supreme over them all.

Thus, when it is said by ancient writers, that tortures and death are not so contrary to human nature as injustice; by this, to be sure, is not meant, that the aversion to the former in mankind is less strong and prevalent than their aversion to the latter: but that the former is only contrary to our nature considered in a partial view, and which takes in only the lowest part of it, that which we have in common with the brutes; whereas the latter is contrary to our nature, considered in a higher sense, as a system and constitution contrary to the whole economy of man\*.

\* Every man, in his physical nature, is one individual single agent. He has likewise properties and principles, each of which may be considered separately, and without regard to the respects which they have to each other. Neither of these are the nature we are taking a view of. But it is the inward frame of man, considered as a *system* or

[42] And from all these things put together, nothing can be more evident, than

*constitution*: whose several parts are united, not by a physical principle of individuation, but by the respects they have to each other; the chief of which is the subjection which the appetites, passions, and particular affections have to the one supreme principle of reflection or conscience. The system or constitution is formed by and consists in these respects and this subjection.

[a] Thus, the body is a *system* or *constitution*: so is a tree: so is every machine. Consider all the several parts of a tree without the natural respects they have to each other, and you have not at all the idea of a tree; but add these respects, and this gives you the idea. The body may be impaired by sickness, a tree may decay, a machine be out of order, and yet the system and constitution of them not totally dissolved.

There is plainly somewhat which answers to all this in the moral constitution of man. Whoever will consider his own nature, will see that the several appetites, passions, and particular affections, have different respects amongst themselves. They are restraints upon, and are in a proportion to, each other.

[b] This proportion is just and perfect, when all those under principles are perfectly coincident with conscience, so far as their nature permits, and, in all cases, under its absolute and entire direction. The least excess or defect, the least alteration of the due proportions amongst themselves, or of their coincidence with conscience, though not proceeding into action, is some degree of disorder in the moral constitution.

But perfection, though plainly intelligible and supposable, was never attained by any man. If the higher principle of reflection maintains its place, and, as much as it can, corrects that disorder, and hinders it from breaking out into action, this is all that can be expected in such a creature as man.

And though the appetites and passions have not their exact due proportion to each other; though they often strive for mastery with judgment or reflection; yet, since the superiority of this principle to all others is the chief respect which forms the constitution, so far as this superiority is maintained, the character, the man, is good, worthy, virtuous.

that, exclusive of revelation, man cannot be considered as a creature left by his Maker to act at random, and live at large up to the extent of his natural power, as passion, humour, wilfulness, happen to carry him; which is the condition brute creatures are in: but that, *from his make, constitution, or nature, he is, in the strictest and most proper sense, a law to himself.* He hath the rule of right within: what is wanting is only that he honestly attend to it.

[43] The inquiries which have been made by men of leisure after some general rule, the conformity to, or disagreement from which, should denominate our actions good or evil, are in many respects of great service. Yet let any plain, honest man, before he engages in any course of action, ask himself, Is this I am going about right, or is it wrong? Is it good, or is it evil? I do not in the least doubt, but that this question would be answered agreeably to truth and virtue, by almost any fair man in almost any circumstance. Neither do there appear any cases which look like exceptions to this, but those of superstition and of partiality to ourselves. Superstition may, perhaps, be somewhat of an exception: but partiality to ourselves is not; this being itself dishonesty. For a man to judge that to be the equitable, the moderate, the right

part for him to act, which he would see to be hard, unjust, oppressive in another; this is plain vice, and can proceed only from great unfairness of mind.

[44] But, allowing that mankind hath the rule of right within himself, yet it may be asked, "What obligations are we under to attend to and follow it?" I answer: it has been proved, that man by his nature is a law to himself, without the particular distinct consideration of the positive sanctions of that law; the rewards and punishments which we feel, and those which from the light of reason we have ground to believe are annexed to it. The question then carries its own answer along with it. Your obligation to obey this law, is its being the law of your nature. That your conscience approves of and attests to such a course of action, is itself alone an obligation. Conscience does not only offer itself to shew us the way we should walk in, but it likewise carries its own authority with it, that it is our natural guide, the guide assigned us by the Author of our nature: it therefore belongs to our condition of being, it is our duty to walk in that path, and follow this guide, without looking about to see whether we may not possibly forsake them with impunity.

[45] However, let us hear what is to be said against obeying this law of our nature.

And the sum is no more than this: "Why should we be concerned about any thing out of and beyond ourselves? If we do find within ourselves regards to others, and restraints of we know not how many different kinds; yet these being embarrassments, and hindering us from going the nearest way to our own good, why should we not endeavour to suppress and get over them?"

[46] Thus, people go on with words, which, when applied to human nature, and the condition in which it is placed in this world, have really no meaning. For does not all this kind of talk go upon supposition, that our happiness in this world consists in somewhat quite distinct from regards to others, and that it is the privilege of vice to be without constraint or confinement? Whereas, on the contrary, the enjoyments, in a manner all the common enjoyments of life, even the pleasures of vice, depend upon these regards of one kind or another to our fellow-creatures. Throw off all regards to others, and we should be quite indifferent to infamy and to honour: there could be no such thing at all as ambition, and scarce any such thing as covetousness; for we should likewise be equally indifferent to the disgrace of poverty, the several neglects and kinds of contempt which accompany this state; and to the reputation of riches, the regard

and respect they usually procure. Neither is restraint by any means peculiar to one course of life; but our very nature, exclusive of conscience and our condition, lays us under an absolute necessity of it. We cannot gain any end whatever without being confined to the proper means, which is often the most painful and uneasy confinement. And, in numberless instances, a present appetite cannot be gratified without such apparent and immediate ruin and misery, that the most dissolute man in the world chooses to forego the pleasure, rather than endure the pain.

[47] Is the meaning, then, to indulge those regards to our fellow-creatures and submit to those restraints, which, upon the whole, are attended with more satisfaction than uneasiness, and get over only those which bring more uneasiness and inconvenience than satisfaction? "Doubtless this was our meaning." You have changed sides, then. Keep to this: be consistent with yourselves; and you and the men of virtue are, in general, perfectly agreed.

But let us take care, and avoid mistakes. Let it not be taken for granted, that the temper of envy, rage, resentment, yields greater delight than meekness, forgiveness, compassion, and good-will: especially when it is acknowledged, that rage, envy, resentment, are in themselves mere misery; and the satisfac-



tion arising from the indulgence of them is little more than relief from that misery: whereas the temper of compassion and benevolence is itself delightful; and the indulgence of it, by doing good, affords new positive delight and enjoyment. Let it not be taken for granted, that the satisfaction arising from the reputation of riches and power, however obtained, and from the respect paid to them, is greater than the satisfaction arising from the reputation of justice, honesty, charity, and the esteem which is universally acknowledged to be their due.

And if it be doubtful which of these satisfactions is the greatest, as there are persons who think neither of them very considerable, yet there can be no doubt concerning ambition and covetousness, virtue and a good mind, considered in themselves, and as leading to different courses of life; there can, I say, be no doubt, which temper and which course is attended with most peace and tranquillity of mind, which with most perplexity, vexation, and inconvenience. And both the virtues and vices which have been now mentioned, do in a manner equally imply in them regards of one kind or another to our fellow-creatures.

[48] And with respect to restraint and confinement: whoever will consider the restraints from fear and shame, the dissimula-

tion, mean arts of concealment, servile compliances, one or other of which belong to almost every course of vice, will soon be convinced, that the man of virtue is by no means upon a disadvantage in this respect. How many instances are there, in which men feel, and own, and cry aloud under the chains of vice with which they are enthralled, and which yet they will not shake off! How many instances, in which persons manifestly go through more pains and self-denial to gratify a vicious passion, than would have been necessary to the conquest of it!

[49] To this is to be added, that when virtue is become habitual, when the temper of it is acquired, what was before confinement ceases to be so, by becoming choice and delight. Whatever restraint and guard upon ourselves may be needful to unlearn any unnatural distortion or odd gesture; yet, in all propriety of speech, natural behaviour must be the most easy and unrestrained.

[50] It is manifest that, in the common course of life, there is seldom any inconsistency between our duty and what is called interest: it is much seldomer that there is an inconsistency between duty and what is really our present interest; meaning by interest happiness and satisfaction. Self-love, then, though confined to the interest of the present world,

does in general perfectly coincide with virtue; and leads us to one and the same course of life. But, whatever exceptions there are to this, which are much fewer than they are commonly thought, all shall be set right at the final distribution of things. It is a manifest absurdity, to suppose evil prevailing finally over good, under the conduct and administration of a perfect mind.

[51] The whole argument which I have been now insisting upon, may be thus summed up and given you in one view. The nature of man is adapted to some course of action or other. Upon comparing some actions with this nature, they appear suitable and correspondent to it: from comparison of other actions with the same nature, there arises to our view some unsuitableness or disproportion. The correspondence of actions to the nature of the agent renders them natural: their disproportion to it, unnatural. That an action is correspondent to the nature of the agent, does not arise from its being agreeable to the principle which happens to be the strongest: for it may be so, and yet be quite disproportionate to the nature of the agent. The correspondence, therefore, or disproportion, arises from somewhat else. This can be nothing but a difference in nature and kind (altogether distinct from strength) between the inward principles. Some, then, are in nature

and kind superior to others. And the correspondence arises from the action being conformable to the higher principle; and the unsuitableness from its being contrary to it. Reasonable self-love and conscience are the chief or superior principles in the nature of man: because an action may be suitable to this nature, though all other principles be violated; but becomes unsuitable, if either of those are. Conscience and self-love, if we understand our true happiness, always lead us the same way.—Duty and interest are perfectly coincident; for the most part in this world, but entirely and in every instance, if we take in the future and the whole; this being implied in the notion of a good and perfect administration of things. Thus, they who have been so wise in their generation, as to regard only their own supposed interest, at the expense and to the injury of others, shall at last find, that he who has given up all the advantages of the present world, rather than violate his conscience and the relations of life, has infinitely better provided for himself, and secured his own interest and happiness.

## DISSERTATION ON VIRTUE.

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[52] **T**HAT which renders beings capable of moral government, is their having a moral nature, and moral faculties of perception and of action. Brute creatures are impressed and actuated by various instincts and propensions: so also are we. But additional to this, we have a capacity of reflecting upon actions and characters, and making them an object to our thought: and on our doing this, we naturally and unavoidably approve some actions, under the peculiar view of their being virtuous and of good desert; and disapprove others, as vicious and of ill desert.

[53] That we have this moral approving and disapproving\* faculty, is certain from our

\* This way of speaking is taken from *Epictetus*<sup>1</sup>, and is made use of as seeming the most full, and least liable to cavil. And the moral faculty may be understood to have these two epithets, δοκιμαστικῆ and ἀποδοκιμαστικῆ, upon a double account; because, upon a survey of actions, whether before or after they are done, it determines them to be good or evil; and also because it determines itself to be the guide

<sup>1</sup> Arr. Epict. lib. i. cap. 1.

experiencing it in ourselves, and recognizing it in each other. It appears from our exercising it unavoidably, in the approbation and disapprobation even of feigned characters: from the words, *right* and *wrong*, *odious* and *amiable*, *base* and *worthy*, with many others of like signification in all languages, applied to actions and characters; from the many written systems of morals which suppose it; since it cannot be imagined, that all these authors, throughout all these treatises, had absolutely no meaning at all to their words, or a meaning merely chimerical: from our natural sense of gratitude, which implies a distinction between merely being the instrument of good, and intending it: from the like distinction every one makes between injury and mere harm, which, *Hobbes* says, is peculiar to mankind; and between injury and just punishment, a distinction plainly natural, prior to the consideration of human laws.

[54] It is manifest great part of common language, and of common behaviour over the world, is formed upon supposition of such a moral faculty: whether called *conscience*, *moral reason*, *moral sense*, or *divine reason*; whether

of action and of life, in contradistinction from all other faculties, or natural principles of action: in the very same manner as speculative reason *directly* and naturally judges of speculative truth and falsehood; and at the same time is attended with a consciousness upon *reflection*, that the natural right to judge of them belongs to it.

considered as a perception\* of the understanding, or as a sentiment of the heart, or, which seems the truth, as including both. Nor is it at all doubtful in the general, what course of action this faculty, or practical discerning power within us, approves, and what it disapproves. For, as much as it has been disputed wherein virtue consists, or whatever ground for doubt there may be about particulars; yet, in general, there is in reality an universally acknowledged standard of it. It is that which all ages and all countries have made profession of in public: it is that which every man you meet, puts on the show of: it is that which the primary and fundamental laws of all civil constitutions over the face of the earth, make it their business and endeavour to enforce the practice of upon mankind: namely, justice, veracity, and regard to common good.

[55] It being manifest, then, in general, that we have such a faculty or discernment as this; it may be of use to remark some things, more distinctly, concerning it.

*First*, It ought to be observed, that the object of this faculty is actions†, comprehending

\* [The editions have "a sentiment of the understanding or a perception of the heart," but I think it cannot be doubtful that Butler intended to write as I have printed it. W.]

† οὐδὲ ἡ ἀρετὴ καὶ κακία—ἐν πείσει ἀλλὰ ἐνεργεία, M. Anton. lib. ix. 16. Virtutis laus omnis in actione consistit. Cic. Off. lib. i. c. 6.

under that name active or practical principles: those principles from which men would act, if occasions and circumstances gave them power; and which, when fixed and habitual in any person, we call his character. It does not appear that brutes have the least reflex sense of actions, as distinguished from events: or that will and design, which constitute the very nature of actions as such, are at all an object to their perception. But to ours they are: and they are the object, and the only one, of the approving and disapproving faculty. Acting, conduct, behaviour, abstracted from all regard to what is, in fact and event, the consequence of it, is itself the natural object of the moral discernment; as speculative truth and falsehood is of speculative reason.

[56] Intention of such and such consequences, indeed, is always included; for it is part of the action itself: but though the intended good or bad consequences do not follow, we have exactly the same sense of the action as if they did. In like manner we think well or ill of characters, abstracted from all consideration of the good or the evil, which persons of such characters have it actually in their power to do. We never, in the moral way, applaud or blame either ourselves or others, for what we enjoy or what we suffer, or for having impressions made upon us which we consider as altogether



out of our power: but only for what we do, or would have done, had it been in our power; or for what we leave undone which we might have done, or would have left undone though we could have done it.

[57] *Secondly*, Our sense or discernment of actions as morally good or evil, implies in it a sense or discernment of them as of good or ill desert. It may be difficult to explain this perception, so as to answer all the questions which may be asked concerning it: but every one speaks of such and such actions as *deserving punishment*; and it is not, I suppose, pretended that they have absolutely no meaning at all to the expression.

[58] Now the meaning plainly is not, that we conceive it for the good of society, that the doer of such actions should be made to suffer. For if unhappily it were resolved, that a man who, by some innocent action was infected with the plague, should be left to perish, lest, by other people's coming near him, the infection should spread; no one would say, he deserved this treatment. Innocence and ill desert are inconsistent ideas.

[59] Ill desert always supposes guilt: and if one be not part of the other, yet they are evidently and naturally connected in our mind. The sight of a man in misery raises our compassion towards him; and, if this misery be

inflicted on him by another, our indignation against the author of it. But when we are informed that the sufferer is a villain, and is punished only for his treachery or cruelty; our compassion exceedingly lessens, and, in many instances, our indignation wholly subsides. Now what produces this effect, is the conception of that in the sufferer, which we call ill desert.

[60] Upon considering them, or viewing together, our notion of vice and that of misery, there results a third, that of ill desert. And thus there is in human creatures an association of the two ideas, natural and moral evil, wickedness and punishment. If this association were merely artificial or accidental, it were nothing: but being most unquestionably natural, it greatly concerns us to attend to it, instead of endeavouring to explain it away.

[61] It may be observed farther, concerning our perception of good and of ill desert, that the former is very weak with respect to common instances of virtue. One reason of which may be, that it does not appear to a spectator, how far such instances of virtue proceed from a virtuous principle, or in what degree this principle is prevalent; since a very weak regard to virtue may be sufficient to make men act well in many common instances.

[62] And on the other hand, our perception of ill desert in vicious actions lessens in propor-

tion to the temptations men are thought to have had to such vices. For, vice in human creatures consisting chiefly in the absence or want of the virtuous principle; though a man be overcome, suppose, by tortures, it does not from thence appear, to what degree the virtuous principle was wanting. All that appears is, that he had it not in such a degree as to prevail over the temptation: but possibly he had it in a degree, which would have rendered him proof against common temptations.

[63] *Thirdly*, Our perception of vice and ill desert arises from, and is the result of, a comparison of actions with the nature and capacities of the agent. For, the mere *neglect* of doing what we ought to do, would, in many cases, be determined by all men to be in the highest degree vicious. And this determination must arise from such comparison and be the result of it; because such neglect would not be vicious in creatures of other natures and capacities, as brutes. And it is the same also with respect to *positive vices*, or such as consist in doing what we ought not. For, every one has a different sense of harm done by an idiot, madman or child, and by one of mature and common understanding; though the action of both, including the intention which is part of the action, be the same: as it may be, since idiots and madmen, as well as children, are capable not only of doing

mischief, but also of intending it. Now this difference must arise from somewhat discerned in the nature or capacities of one, which renders the action vicious; and the want of which in the other, renders the same action innocent or less vicious: and this plainly supposes a comparison, whether reflected upon or not, between the action and capacities of the agent, previous to our determining an action to be vicious. And hence arises a proper application of the epithets, *incongruous, unsuitable, disproportionate, unfit*, to actions which our moral faculty determines to be vicious.

[64] *Fourthly*, It deserves to be considered, whether men are more at liberty, in point of morals, to make themselves miserable without reason, than to make other people so: or dissolutely to neglect their own greater good, for the sake of a present lesser gratification, than they are to neglect the good of others, whom nature has committed to their care. It should seem, that a due concern about our own interest or happiness, and a reasonable endeavour to secure and promote it, which is, I think, very much the meaning of the word, *prudence*, in our language; it should seem, that this is virtue, and the contrary behaviour faulty and blameable; since, in the calmest way of reflection, we approve of the first, and condemn the other conduct, both in ourselves and others.

[65] This approbation and disapprobation are altogether different from mere desire of our own, or of their happiness, and from sorrow upon missing it. For the object or occasion of this last kind of perception, is satisfaction or uneasiness: whereas the object of the first is active behaviour. In one case, what our thoughts fix upon, is our condition: in the other, our conduct.

[66] It is true, indeed, that nature has not given us so sensible a disapprobation of imprudence and folly, either in *ourselves* or *others*, as of falsehood, injustice, and cruelty: I suppose, because that constant habitual sense of private interest and good, which we always carry about with us, renders such sensible disapprobation less necessary, less wanting, to keep us from imprudently neglecting our own happiness, and foolishly injuring ourselves, than it is necessary and wanting to keep us from injuring others, to whose good we cannot have so strong and constant a regard: and also because imprudence and folly, appearing to bring its own punishment more immediately and constantly than injurious behaviour, it less needs the additional punishment, which would be inflicted upon it by others, had they the same sensible indignation against it, as against injustice and fraud and cruelty.

Besides, unhappiness being in itself the na-

tural object of compassion; the unhappiness which people bring upon themselves, though it be wilfully, excites in us some pity for them: and this of course lessens our displeasure against them.

[67] But still it is matter of experience, that we are formed so, as to reflect very severely upon the greater instances of imprudent neglects and foolish rashness, both in ourselves and others. In instances of this kind, men often say of themselves with remorse, and of others with some indignation, that they deserved to suffer such calamities, because they brought them upon themselves, and would not take warning. Particularly when persons come to poverty and distress by a long course of extravagance, and after frequent admonitions, though without falsehood or injustice; we plainly do not regard such people as alike objects of compassion with those, who are brought into the same condition by unavoidable accidents.

[68] From these things it appears, that prudence is a species of virtue, and folly of vice: meaning by *folly*, somewhat quite different from mere incapacity; a thoughtless want of that regard and attention to our own happiness, which we had capacity for. And this the word properly includes; and, as it seems, in its usual acceptance: for we scarcely apply it to brute creatures.

[69] However, if any person be disposed to

dispute the matter, I shall very willingly give him up the words *virtue* and *vice*, as not applicable to prudence and folly: but must beg leave to insist, that the faculty within us, which is the judge of actions, approves of prudent actions, and disapproves imprudent ones; I say prudent and imprudent *actions* as such, and considered distinctly from the happiness or misery which they occasion. And by the way, this observation may help to determine what justness there is in that objection against religion, that it teaches us to be interested and selfish.

[70] *Fifthly*, Without inquiring how far, and in what sense, virtue is resolvable into benevolence, and vice into the want of it; it may be proper to observe, that benevolence and the want of it, singly considered, are in no sort the whole of virtue and vice.

For if this were the case, in the review of one's own character or that of others, our moral understanding and moral sense would be indifferent to every thing, but the degrees in which benevolence prevailed, and the degrees in which it was wanting. That is, we should neither approve of benevolence to some persons rather than to others, nor disapprove injustice and falsehood upon any other account, than merely as an overbalance of happiness was foreseen likely to be produced by the first, and of misery by the second.

But now, on the contrary, suppose two men competitors for any thing whatever, which would be of equal advantage to each of them; though nothing indeed would be more impertinent, than for a stranger to busy himself to get one of them preferred to the other; yet such endeavour would be virtue, in behalf of a friend or benefactor, abstracted from all consideration of distant consequences: as that examples of gratitude, and the cultivation of friendship, would be of general good to the world.

[71] Again, suppose one man should, by fraud or violence, take from another the fruit of his labour, with intent to give it to a third, who, he thought, would have as much pleasure from it, as would balance the pleasure which the first possessor would have had in the enjoyment, and his vexation in the loss of it; suppose also that no bad consequences would follow: yet such an action would surely be vicious.

[72] Nay, farther, were treachery, violence, and injustice, no otherwise vicious, than as foreseen likely to produce an overbalance of misery to society; then, if in any case a man could procure to himself as great advantage by an act of injustice, as the whole foreseen inconvenience, likely to be brought upon others by it, would amount to; such a piece of injustice would not be faulty or vicious at all: because it would be no more than, in any other case, for a man to



prefer his own satisfaction to another's in equal degrees.

[73] The fact then appears to be, that we are constituted so, as to condemn falsehood, unprovoked violence, injustice, and to approve of benevolence to some preferably to others, abstracted from all other consideration, which conduct is likeliest to produce an overbalance of happiness or misery.

And therefore, were the Author of nature to propose nothing to Himself as an end but the production of happiness, were his moral character merely that of benevolence; yet ours is not so.

[74] Upon that supposition indeed, the only reason of his giving us the above-mentioned approbation of benevolence to some persons rather than others, and disapprobation of falsehood, unprovoked violence, and injustice, must be, that he foresaw this constitution of our nature would produce more happiness, than forming us with a temper of more general benevolence.

But still, since this is our constitution; falsehood, violence, injustice, must be vice in us, and benevolence to some preferably to others, virtue; abstracted from all consideration of the overbalance of evil or good, which they may appear likely to produce.

[75] Now if human creatures are endued

with such a moral nature as we have been explaining, or with a moral faculty, the natural object of which is actions: moral government must consist in rendering them happy and unhappy, in rewarding and punishing them, as they follow, neglect, or depart from, the moral rule of action interwoven in their nature, or suggested and enforced by this moral faculty; in rewarding and punishing them upon account of their so doing.

[76] I am not sensible that I have, in this fifth observation [70], contradicted what any author designed to assert. But some of great and distinguished merit have, I think, expressed themselves in a manner, which may occasion some danger to careless readers, of imagining the whole of virtue to consist in singly aiming, according to the best of their judgment, at promoting the happiness of mankind in the present state; and the whole of vice, in doing what they foresee, or might foresee, is likely to produce an overbalance of unhappiness in it: than which mistakes, none can be conceived more terrible.

For it is certain, that some of the most shocking instances of injustice, adultery, murder, perjury, and even of persecution, may, in many supposable cases, not have the appearance of being likely to produce an overbalance of misery in the present state; perhaps sometimes may

have the contrary appearance. For this reflection might easily be carried on, but I forbear—The happiness of the world is the concern of him who is the Lord and the proprietor of it: nor do we know what we are about, when we endeavour to promote the good of mankind in any ways but those which He has directed; that is indeed in all ways not contrary to veracity and justice.

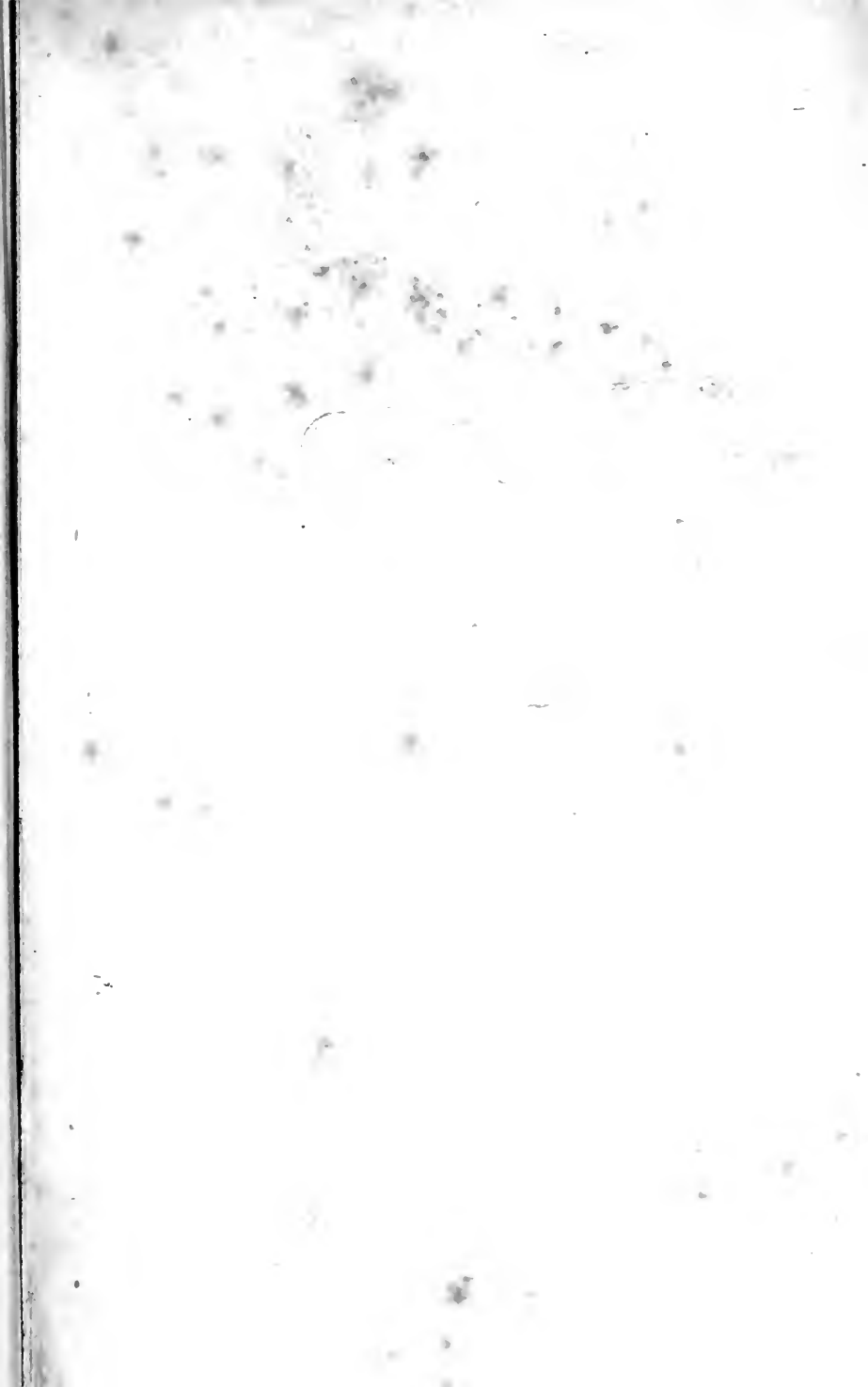
[77] I speak thus upon supposition of persons really endeavouring, in some sort, to do good without regard to these. But the truth seems to be, that such supposed endeavours proceed, almost always, from ambition, the spirit of party, or some indirect principle, concealed perhaps in great measure from persons themselves.

[78] And though it is our business and our duty to endeavour, within the bounds of veracity and justice, to contribute to the ease, convenience, and even cheerfulness and diversion of our fellow-creatures: yet, from our short views, it is greatly uncertain whether this endeavour will, in particular instances, produce an overbalance of happiness upon the whole; since so many and distant things must come into the account. And that which makes it our duty, is, that there is some appearance that it will, and no positive appearance sufficient to

balance this, on the contrary side; and also, that such a benevolent endeavour is a cultivation of that most excellent of all virtuous principles, the active principle of benevolence.

[79] However, though veracity, as well as justice, is to be our rule of life; it must be added, otherwise a snare will be laid in the way of some plain men, that the use of common forms of speech generally understood, cannot be falsehood; and, in general, that there can be no designed falsehood without designing to deceive. It must likewise be observed, that in numberless cases, a man may be under the strictest obligations to what he foresees will deceive, without his intending it. For it is impossible not to foresee that the words and actions of men in different ranks and employments, and of different educations, will perpetually be mistaken by each other: and it cannot but be so, whilst they will judge with the utmost carelessness, as they daily do, of what they are not, perhaps, enough informed to be competent judges of, even though they considered it with great attention.

THE END.





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