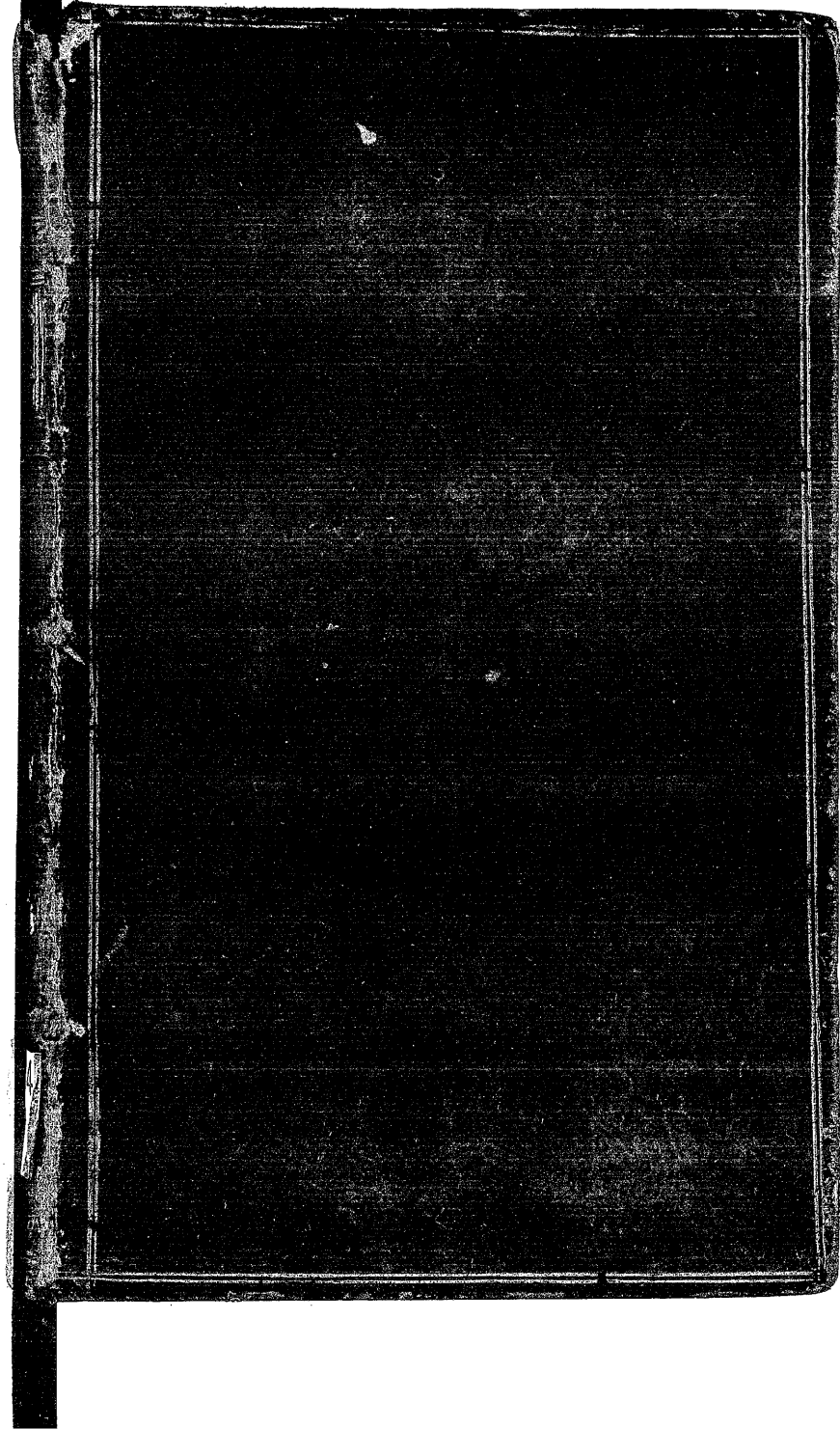


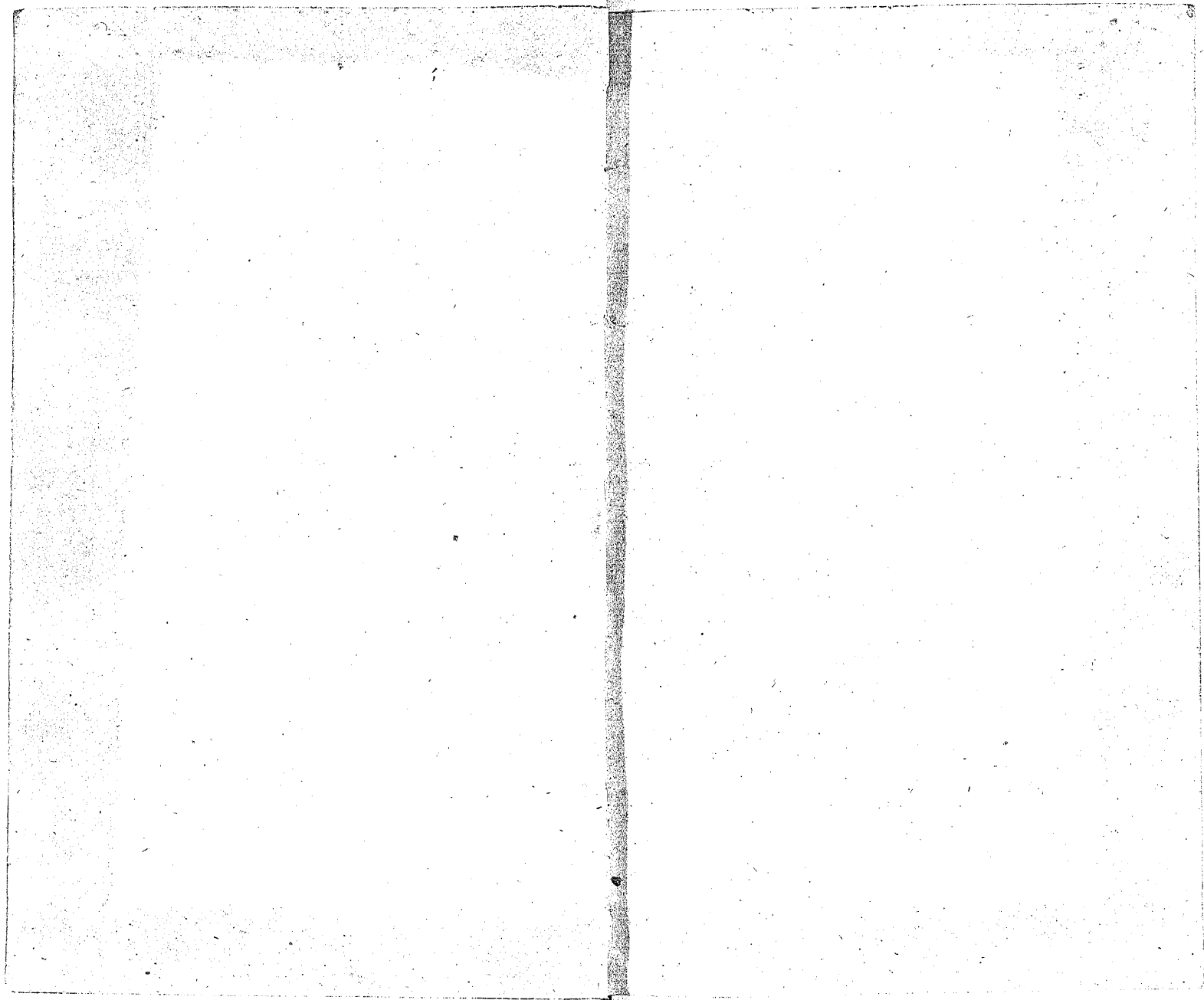
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FOUR  
DISSERTATIONS.

- I. THE NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION.
- II. OF THE PASSIONS.
- III. OF TRAGEDY.
- IV. OF THE STANDARD OF TASTE.



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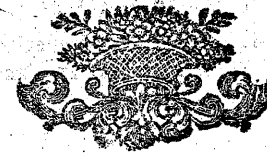
FOUR

## DISSERTATIONS.

- I. THE NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION.
- II. OF THE PASSIONS.
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- IV. OF THE STANDARD OF TASTE.

BY

DAVID HUME, Esq.



L O N D O N,

Printed for A. MILLAR, in the Strand.

MDCCLVII.

13334  
H92F



TO

The Reverend Mr. Hume,

Author of DOUGLAS, a Tragedy.

MY DEAR SIR,

**I**T was the practice of the an-  
tients to address their compositions  
only to friends and equals, and to ren-  
der their dedications monuments of  
regard and affection, not of fervility  
and flattery. In those days of inge-  
nuous and candid liberty, a dedication  
did honour to the person to whom it

a

was

ii DEDICATION.

was addressed, without degrading the author. If any partiality appeared towards the patron, it was at least the partiality of friendship and affection.

ANOTHER instance of true liberty, of which antient times can alone afford us an example, is the liberty of thought, which engaged men of letters, however different in their abstract opinions, to maintain a mutual friendship and regard; and never to quarrel about principles, while they agreed in inclinations and manners. Science was often the subject of disputation, never of animosity. *Cicero*, an academic, addressed his philosophical treatises, sometimes to *Brutus*, a stoic; sometimes to *Atticus*, an epicurean.

I

I HAVE

DEDICATION. iii

I HAVE been seized with a strong desire of renewing these laudable practices of antiquity, by addressing the following dissertations to you, my good friend: For such I will ever call and esteem you, notwithstanding the opposition, which prevails between us, with regard to many of our speculative tenets. These differences of opinion I have only found to enliven our conversation; while our common passion for science and letters served as a cement to our friendship. I still admired your genius, even when I imagined, that you lay under the influence of prejudice; and you sometimes told me, that you excused my errors, on account of the candor and sincerity, which, you thought, accompanied them.

a 2

BUT

iv DEDICATION.

BUT to tell truth, it is less my admiration of your fine genius, which has engaged me to make this address to you, than my esteem of your character and my affection to your person. That generosity of mind which ever accompanies you; that cordiality of friendship, that spirited honour and integrity, have long interested me strongly in your behalf, and have made me desirous, that a monument of our mutual amity should be publicly erected, and, if possible, be preserved to posterity.

I own too, that I have the ambition to be the first who shall in public express his admiration of your noble tragedy of DOUGLAS; one of the most  
inter-

DEDICATION. v

interesting and pathetic pieces, that was ever exhibited on any theatre. Should I give it the preference to the *Merope* of *Maffei*, and to that of *Voltaire*, which it resembles in its subject; should I affirm, that it contained more fire and spirit than the former, more tenderness and simplicity than the latter; I might be accused of partiality: And how could I entirely acquit myself, after the professions of friendship, which I have made you? But the unfeigned tears which flowed from every eye, in the numerous representations which were made of it on this theatre; the unparalleled command, which you appeared to have over every affection of the human breast: These are incontestible proofs, that you possess the true theatric genius of *Shakespear*  
and



vi DEDICATION.

and *Otway*, refined from the unhappy barbarism of the one, and licentiousness of the other.

My enemies, you know, and, I own, even sometimes my friends, have reproached me with the love of paradoxes and singular opinions; and I expect to be exposed to the same imputation, on account of the character, which I have here given of your DOUGLAS. I shall be told, no doubt, that I had artfully chosen the only time, when this high esteem of that piece could be regarded as a paradox, to wit, before its publication; and that not being able to contradict in this particular the sentiments of the public, I have, at least, resolved to go before them. But I shall be amply compensated

DEDICATION. vii  
penfated for all these pleasantries, if you accept this testimony of my regard, and believe me to be, with the greatest sincerity,

DEAR SIR,

*Your most affectionate Friend,*

*and humble Servant,*

EDINBURGH, 3,  
Jan. 1757.

DAVID HUME.



DISSERTATION I.

NATURAL HISTORY

OF

RELIGION.



E47157

DISSERTATION I.

*The Natural History of Religion.*

INTRODUCTION.

AS every enquiry, which regards Religion, is of the utmost importance, there are two questions in particular, which challenge our principal attention, to wit, that concerning its foundation in reason, and that concerning its origin in human nature. Happily, the first question, which is the most important, admits of the most obvious, at least, the clearest solution. The whole frame of nature bespeaks an intelligent author; and no rational enquirer can, after serious reflexion, suspend his belief a moment with regard to the primary principles of genuine Theism and Religion. But the other question, concerning the origin of religion in human nature, admits of some more difficulty: The belief of invisible, intelligent power has been very generally diffused over the human race, in all places and in all ages; but it has neither perhaps been so universal as to admit of no exceptions,

B

DISSERTATION I.

*The Natural History of Religion.*

TO

M O I G I E R

ceptions, nor has it been, in any degree, uniform in the ideas, which it has suggested. Some nations have been discovered, who entertained no sentiments of Religion, if travellers and historians may be credited; and no two nations, and scarce any two men, have ever agreed precisely in the same sentiments. It would appear, therefore, that this preconception springs not from an original instinct or primary impression of nature, such as gives rise to self-love, affection betwixt the sexes, love of progeny, gratitude, resentment; since every instinct of this kind has been found absolutely universal in all nations and ages, and has always a precise, determinate object, which it inflexibly pursues. The first religious principles must be secondary; such as may easily be perverted by various accidents and causes, and whose operation too, in some cases, may, by an extraordinary concurrence of circumstances, be altogether prevented. What those principles are, which give rise to the original belief, and what those accidents and causes are, which direct its operation, is the subject of our present enquiry.

I. It

## I.

IT appears to me, that if we consider the improvement of human society, from rude beginnings to a state of greater perfection, polytheism or idolatry was, and necessarily must have been, the first and most antient religion of mankind. This opinion I shall endeavour to confirm by the following arguments.

'Tis a matter of fact uncontestable, that about 1700 years ago all mankind were idolaters. The doubtful and sceptical principles of a few philosophers; or the theism, and that too not entirely pure, of one or two nations, form no objection worth regarding. Behold then the clear testimony of history. The farther we mount up into antiquity, the more do we find mankind plunged into idolatry. No marks, no symptoms of any more perfect religion. The most antient records of human race still present us with polytheism as the popular and established system. The north, the south, the east, the west, give their unanimous testimony to the same fact. What can be opposed to so full an evidence?

B 2

As

As far as writing or history reaches, mankind, in antient times, appear universally to have been polytheists. Shall we assert, that, in more antient times, before the knowledge of letters, or the discovery of any art or science, men entertained the principles of pure theism? That is, while they were ignorant and barbarous, they discovered truth: But fell into error, as soon as they acquired learning and politeness.

BUT in this assertion you not only contradict all appearance of probability, but also our present experience concerning the principles and opinions of barbarous nations. The savage tribes of *America*, *Africa*, and *Asia* are all idolaters. Not a single exception to this rule. Inasmuch, that, were a traveller to transport himself into any unknown region; if he found inhabitants cultivated with arts and sciences, tho' even upon that supposition there are odds against their being theists, yet could he not safely, till farther enquiry, pronounce any thing on that head: But if he found them ignorant and barbarous, he might beforehand declare them idolaters; and there scarce is a possibility of his being mistaken.

It

IT seems certain, that, according to the natural progress of human thought, the ignorant multitude must first entertain some groveling and familiar notion of superior powers, before they stretch their conception to that perfect being, who bestowed order on the whole frame of nature. We may as reasonably imagine, that men inhabited palaces before huts and cottages, or studied geometry before agriculture; as assert that the deity appeared to them a pure spirit, omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent, before he was apprehended to be a powerful, tho' limited being, with human passions and appetites, limbs and organs. The mind rises gradually, from inferior to superior: By abstracting from what is imperfect, it forms an idea of perfection: And slowly distinguishing the nobler parts of its frame from the grosser, it learns to transfer only the former, much elevated and refined, to its divinity. Nothing could disturb this natural progress of thought, but some obvious and invincible argument, which might immediately lead the mind into the pure principles of theism, and make it overleap, at one bound, the vast interval, which is interposed betwixt the human and the divine nature.

B 3

ture.

6 DISSERTATION I.

ture. But tho' I allow, that the order and frame of the universe, when accurately examined, affords such an argument; yet I can never think that this consideration could have an influence on mankind when they formed their first, rude notions of religion.

THE causes of objects, which are quite familiar to us, never strike our attention or curiosity; and however extraordinary or surprizing these objects may be in themselves, they are past over, by the raw and ignorant multitude, without much examination or enquiry. *Adam*, rising at once, in paradise, and in the full perfection of his faculties, would naturally, as represented by *Milton*, be astonished at the glorious appearances of nature, the heavens, the air, the earth, his own organs and members; and would be led to ask, whence this wonderful scene arose. But a barbarous, necessitous animal (such as man is on the first origin of society) pressed by such numerous wants and passions, has no leisure to admire the regular face of nature, or make enquiries concerning the cause of objects, to which, from his infancy, he has been gradually accustomed. On the contrary, the more regular and uniform, that is, the more perfect

NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION. 7

perfect, nature appears, the more is he familiarized to it, and the less inclined to scrutinize and examine it. A monstrous birth excites his curiosity, and is deemed a prodigy. It alarms him from its novelty; and immediately sets him a trembling, and sacrificing, and praying. But an animal compleat in all its limbs and organs, is to him an ordinary spectacle, and produces no religious opinion or affection. Ask him, whence that animal arose; he will tell you, from the copulation of its parents. And these, whence? From the copulation of theirs. A few removes satisfy his curiosity, and sets the objects at such a distance, that he entirely loses sight of them. Imagine not, that he will so much as start the question, whence the first animal; much less, whence the whole system or united fabric of the universe arose. Or, if you start such a question to him, expect not, that he will employ his mind with any anxiety about a subject, so remote, so uninteresting, and which so much exceeds the bounds of his capacity.

BUT farther, if men were at first led into the belief of one supreme being, by reasoning from the frame of nature, they could never possibly

§ DISSERTATION I.

leave that belief, in order to embrace idolatry; but the same principles of reasoning, which at first produced, and diffused over mankind, so magnificent an opinion, must be able, with greater facility, to preserve it. The first-invention and proof of any doctrine is infinitely more difficult than the supporting and retaining it.

THERE is a great difference betwixt historical facts and speculative opinions; nor is the knowledge of the one propagated in the same manner with that of the other. An historical fact, while it passes by oral tradition from eye-witnesses and contemporaries, is disguised in every successive narration, and may at last retain but very small, if any, resemblance of the original truth, on which it was founded. The frail memories of men, their love of exaggeration, their supine carelessness; these principles, if not corrected by books and writing, soon pervert the account of historical events; where argument or reasoning has little or no place, nor can ever recal the truth, which has once escaped those narrations. 'Tis thus the fables of *Hercules*, *Theseus*, *Bacchus* are supposed to have been originally founded in true history, corrupted by tradition. But with regard to speculative

NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION. 9

ative opinions, the case is far otherwise. If these opinions be founded in arguments so clear and obvious as to carry conviction with the generality of mankind, the same arguments, which at first diffused the opinions, will still preserve them in their original purity. If the arguments be more abstruse, and more remote from vulgar apprehensions, the opinions will always be confined to a few persons; and as soon as men leave the contemplation of the arguments, the opinions will immediately be lost and buried in oblivion. Which ever side of this dilemma we take, it must appear impossible, that theism could, from reasoning, have been the primary religion of human race, and have afterwards, by its corruption, given birth to idolatry and to all the various superstitions of the heathen world. Reason, when very obvious, prevents these corruptions: When abstruse, it keeps the principles entirely from the knowledge of the vulgar, who are alone liable to corrupt any principles, or opinions.

10 DISSERTATION I.

II.

IF we would, therefore, indulge our curiosity, in enquiring concerning the origin of religion, we must turn our thoughts towards idolatry or polytheism, the primitive Religion of uninstructed mankind.

WERE men led into the apprehension of invisible, intelligent power by a contemplation of the works of nature, they could never possibly entertain any conception but of one single being, who bestowed existence and order on this vast machine, and adjusted all its parts, according to one regular plan or connected system. For tho', to persons of a certain turn of mind, it may not appear altogether absurd, that several independent beings, endowed with superior wisdom, might conspire in the contrivance and execution of one regular plan; yet is this a mere arbitrary supposition, which, even if allowed possible, must be confessed neither to be supported by probability nor necessity. All things in the universe are evidently of a piece. Every thing is adjusted to every thing. One design

NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION. 11

design prevails thro' the whole. And this uniformity leads the mind to acknowledge one author; because the conception of different authors, without any distinction of attributes or operations, serves only to give perplexity to the imagination, without bestowing any satisfaction on the understanding <sup>a</sup>.

ON the other hand, if, leaving the works of nature, we trace the footsteps of invisible power in the various and contrary events of human life, we are necessarily led into polytheism, and to the acknowledgment of several limited and imperfect deities. Storms and tempests ruin what is nourished by the sun. The sun destroys what is fostered by the moisture of dews and rains. War may be favourable to a nation, whom the inclemency of the seasons afflicts with famine. Sickness and pestilence may depopulate a kingdom, amidst the most profuse plenty. The same nation is not, at the

<sup>a</sup> The statue of *Laocoon*, as we learn from *Pliny*, was the work of three artists: But 'tis certain, that, were we not told so, we should never have concluded, that a groupe of figures, cut from one stone, and united in one plan, was not the work and contrivance of one statuary. To ascribe any single effect to the combination of several causes, is not surely a natural and obvious supposition.



same time, equally successful by sea and by land. And a nation, which now triumphs over its enemies, may anon submit to their more prosperous arms. In short, the conduct of events or what we call the plan of a particular providence, is so full of variety and uncertainty, that, if we suppose it immediately ordered by any intelligent beings, we must acknowledge a contrariety in their designs and intentions, a constant combat of opposite powers, and a repentance or change of intention in the same power, from impotence or levity. Each nation has its tutelar deity. Each element is subjected to its invisible power or agent. The province of each god is separate from that of another. Nor are the operations of the same god always certain and invariable. To day, he protects: To-morrow, he abandons us. Prayers and sacrifices, rites and ceremonies, well or ill performed, are the sources of his favour or enmity, and produce all the good or ill fortune, which are to be found amongst mankind.

WE may conclude, therefore, that, in all nations, which have embraced polytheism or idolatry, the first ideas of religion arose not from a contemplation of the works of nature,  
but

but from a concern with regard to the events of life, and from the incessant hopes and fears, which actuate the human mind. Accordingly, we find, that all idolaters, having separated the provinces of their deities, have recourse to that invisible agent, to whose authority they are immediately subjected, and whose province it is to superintend that course of actions, in which they are, at any time, engaged. *Juno* is invoked at marriages; *Lucina* at births. *Nep-tune* receives the prayers of seamen; and *Mars* of warriors. The husbandman cultivates his field under the protection of *Ceres*; and the merchant acknowledges the authority of *Mer-cury*. Each natural event is supposed to be governed by some intelligent agent; and nothing prosperous or adverse can happen in life, which may not be the subject of peculiar prayers or thanksgivings <sup>b</sup>.

<sup>b</sup> *Fragilis et laboriosa mortalitas in partes ista digessit, infirmitatis suæ memor, ut portionibus quisquis coleret, quo maxime indigeret.* Plin. lib. ii. cap. 7. So early as *Hesiod's* time there were 30,000 deities. *Oper. & Dies*. lib. i. ver. 250. But the task to be performed by these, seems still too great for their number. The provinces of the deities were so subdivided, that there was even a God of *Sneezing*. See *Arist. Probl.* Sect. 33. cap. 7. The province of copulation, suitable to the importance and dignity of it, was divided amongst several deities.

It must necessarily, indeed, be allowed, that, in order to carry men's attention beyond the visible course of things, or lead them into any inference concerning invisible intelligent power, they must be actuated by some passion, which prompts their thought and reflection; some motive, which urges their first enquiry. But what passion shall we here have recourse to, for explaining an effect of such mighty consequence? Not speculative curiosity surely, or the pure love of truth. That motive is too refined for such gross apprehensions, and would lead men into enquiries concerning the frame of nature; a subject too large and comprehensive for their narrow capacities. No passions, therefore, can be supposed to work upon such barbarians, but the ordinary affections of human life; the anxious concern for happiness, the dread of future misery, the terror of death, the thirst of revenge, the appetite for food and other necessaries. Agitated by hopes and fears of this nature, especially the latter, men scrutinize, with a trembling curiosity, the course of future causes, and examine the various and

contrary events of human life. And in this disordered scene, with eyes still more disordered and astonished, they see the first obscure traces of divinity.

## III.

WE are placed in this world, as in a great theatre, where the true springs and causes of every event, are entirely unknown to us; nor have we either sufficient wisdom to foresee, or power to prevent those ills, with which we are continually threatened. We hang in perpetual suspense betwixt life and death, health and sickness, plenty and want; which are distributed amongst the human species by secret and unknown causes, whose operation is oft unexpected, and always unaccountable. These *unknown causes*, then, become the constant object of our hope and fear; and while the passions are kept in perpetual alarm by an anxious expectation of the events, the imagination is equally employed in forming ideas of those powers, on which we have so entire a dependence. Could men anatomize nature, according to the most probable, at least the most intelligible philosophy, they would find, that these causes are nothing but the particular fabric and structure of the minute parts of their own bodies and of external objects; and that, by a regular and constant machinery, all the events are produced,

duced, about which they are so much concerned. But this philosophy exceeds the comprehension of the ignorant multitude, who can only conceive the *unknown causes* in a general and confused manner; tho' their imagination, perpetually employed on the same subject, must labour to form some particular and distinct idea of them. The more they consider these causes themselves, and the uncertainty of their operation, the less satisfaction do they meet with in their research; and, however unwilling, they must at last have abandoned so arduous an attempt, were it not for a propensity in human nature, which leads into a system, that gives them some seeming satisfaction.

THERE is an universal tendency amongst mankind to conceive all beings like themselves, and to transfer to every object those qualities, with which they are familiarly acquainted, and of which they are intimately conscious. We find human faces in the moon, armies in the clouds; and by a natural propensity, if not corrected by experience and reflection, ascribe malice and good-will to every thing, that hurts or pleases us. Hence the frequency and beauty of the *prosopopœia* in poetry, where trees, mountains,

18 DISSERTATION I.

mountains and streams are personified, and the inanimate parts of nature acquire sentiment and passion. And tho' these poetical figures and expressions gain not on the belief, they may serve, at least, to prove a certain tendency in the imagination, without which they could neither be beautiful nor natural. Nor is a river-god or hama-dryad always taken for a mere poetical or imaginary personage; but may sometimes enter into the real creed of the ignorant vulgar; while each grove or field is represented as possess'd of a particular *genius* or invisible power, which inhabits and protects it. Nay, philosophers cannot entirely exempt themselves from this natural frailty; but have oft ascribed to inanimate matter the horror of a *vacuum*, sympathies, antipathies, and other affections of human nature. The absurdity is not less, while we cast our eyes upwards; and transferring, as is too usual, human passions and infirmities to the deity, represent him as jealous and revengeful, capricious and partial, and, in short, a wicked and foolish man in every respect, but his superior power and authority. No wonder, then, that mankind, being placed in such an absolute ignorance of causes, and being at the same time so anxious concerning their future fortunes,

NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION. 19

fortunes, should immediatly acknowledge a dependence on invisible powers, possess'd of sentiment and intelligence. The *unknown causes*, which continually employ their thought, appearing always in the same aspect, are all apprehended to be of the same kind or species. Nor is it long before we ascribe to them thought, and reason, and passion, and sometimes even the limbs and figures of men, in order to bring them nearer to a resemblance with ourselves.

In proportion as any man's course of life is governed by accident, we always find, that he increases in superstition; as may particularly be observed of gamesters and sailors, who, tho' of all mankind, the least capable of serious meditation, abound most in frivolous and superstitious apprehensions. The gods, says *Coriolanus* in *Dionysus*\*, have an influence in every affair; but above all, in war; where the event is so uncertain. All human life, especially before the institution of order and good government, being subject to fortuitous accidents; it is natural, that superstition should prevail every where in barbarous ages, and put men on the most

\* Lib. viii.

earnest enquiry concerning those invisible powers, who dispose of their happiness or misery. Ignorant of astronomy and the anatomy of plants and animals, and too little curious to observe the admirable adjustment of final causes; they remain still unacquainted with a first and supreme creator, and with that infinitely perfect spirit, who alone, by his almighty will, bestowed order on the whole frame of nature. Such a magnificent idea is too big for their narrow conceptions, which can neither observe the beauty of the work, nor comprehend the grandeur of its author. They suppose their deities, however potent and invisible, to be nothing but a species of human creatures, perhaps raised from among mankind, and retaining all human passions and appetites, along with corporeal limbs and organs. Such limited beings, tho' masters of human fate, being, each of them, incapable of extending his influence every where, must be vastly multiplied, in order to answer that variety of events, which happen over the whole face of nature. Thus every place is stored with a crowd of local deities; and thus idolatry has prevailed, and still prevails, among the greatest part of uninstruced mankind\*.

\* The following lines of *Euripides* are so much to the present purpose that I cannot forbear quoting them:

ANY

ANY of the human affections may lead us into the notion of invisible, intelligent power; hope as well as fear, gratitude as well as affliction: But if we examine our own hearts, or observe what passes around us, we shall find, that men are much oftener thrown on their knees by the melancholy than by the agreeable passions. Prosperity is easily received as our due, and few questions are asked concerning its cause or author. It engenders cheerfulness and activity and alacrity and a lively enjoyment of every social and sensual pleasure: And during this state of mind, men have little leisure or inclination to think of the unknown, invisible regions. On the other hand, every disastrous accident alarms us, and sets us on enquiries concerning the principles whence it arose: Apprehensions spring up with regard to futurity: And the mind, sunk into diffidence, terror, and melancholy, has recourse to every

Οὐκ ἔστιν ἄθεν πιστοῦ, ἢτ' εὐδοξία,

Οὐτ' ἂν καλῶς πρασσόντα μὴ πράξεν κακῶς.

Φρεσὶ δ' αὐθ' οἱ θεοὶ παλιν τε καὶ προση,

Ταραγμῶν ἐπιθεήεις, ὡς ἀγνώστῃ

Σεβόμεν αὐλῆς.

HECUBA.

*There is nothing secure in the world; no glory, no prosperity. The gods toss all life into confusion; mix every thing with its reverse; that all of us, from our ignorance and uncertainty, may pay them the more worship and reverence.*

method

method of appeasing those secret, intelligent powers, on whom our fortune is supposed entirely to depend.

No topic is more usual with all popular divines than to display the advantages of affliction, in bringing men to a due sense of religion; by subduing their confidence and sensuality, which, in times of prosperity, make them forgetful of a divine providence. Nor is this topic confined merely to modern religions. The ancients have also employed it. *Fortune has never liberally, without envy, says a Greek historian<sup>a</sup>, bestowed an unmixt happiness on mankind; but with all her gifts has ever conjoined some disastrous circumstance, in order to chastize men into a reverence for the gods, whom, in a continued course of prosperity, they are apt to neglect and forget.*

WHAT age or period of life is the most addicted to superstition? The weakest and most timid. What sex? The same answer must be given. *The leaders and examples of every kind of superstition, says Strabo<sup>b</sup>, are the women. These excite the men to devotion and supplications, and the observance of religious days. It is rare to meet*

<sup>a</sup> Diod. Sic. Lib. iii.

<sup>b</sup> Lib. vii.

with

*with one, that lives apart from the females, and yet is addicted to such practices. And nothing can, for this reason, be more improbable, than the account given of an order of men amongst the Getes, who practised celibacy, and were notwithstanding the most religious fanatics.* A method of reasoning, which would lead us to entertain a very bad idea of the devotion of monks; did we not know by an experience, not so common, perhaps, in Strabo's days, that one may practice celibacy, and profess chastity; and yet maintain the closest connexions and most entire sympathy with that timorous and pious sex.

## IV.

THE only point of theology, in which we shall find a consent of mankind almost universal, is, that there is invisible, intelligent power in the world: But whether this power be supreme or subordinate, whether confined to one being or distributed amongst several, what attributes, qualities, connexions or principles of action ought to be ascribed to those beings; concerning all these points, there is the widest difference in the popular systems of theology. Our ancestors in *Europe*, before the revival of letters, believed, as we do at present, that there was one supreme God, the author of nature, whose power, tho', in itself, uncontrollable, yet was often exerted by the interposition of his angels and subordinate ministers, who executed his sacred purposes. But they also believed, that all nature was full of other invisible powers; fairies, goblins, elves, sprites; beings, stronger and mightier than men, but much inferior to the celestial natures, who surround the throne of God. Now suppose, that any one, in those ages, had denied the existence of God and of his angels; would not his impiety justly have deserved

deserved the appellation of atheism, even tho' he had still allowed, by some odd capricious reasoning, that the popular stories of elves and fairies were just and well-grounded? The difference, on the one hand, betwixt such a person and a genuine thief is infinitely greater, than that, on the other, betwixt him and one, that absolutely excludes all invisible, intelligent power. And it is a fallacy, merely from the casual resemblance of names, without any conformity of meaning, to rank such opposite opinions under the same denomination.

To any one, who considers justly of the matter, it will appear, that the gods of all polytheists or idolaters are no better than the elves or fairies of our ancestors, and merit as little any pious worship or veneration. These pretended religionists are really a kind of superstitious atheists, and acknowledge no being, that corresponds to our idea of a deity. No first principle of mind or thought: No supreme government and administration: No divine contrivance or intention in the fabric of the world.

THE *Chinese*, when <sup>a</sup> their prayers are not answered, beat their idols. The deities of the *Laplanders* are any large stone which they meet with of an extraordinary shape <sup>b</sup>. The *Egyptian* mythologists, in order to account for animal worship, said, that the gods, pursued by the violence of earth-born men, who were their enemies, had formerly been obliged to disguise themselves under the semblance of beasts <sup>c</sup>. The *Caunii*, a nation in the lesser *Asia*, resolving to admit no strange gods amongst them, regularly, at certain seasons, assembled themselves completely armed, beat the air with their lances, and proceeded in that manner to their frontiers; in order, as they said, to expel the foreign deities <sup>d</sup>. Not even the immortal gods, said some *German* nations to *Cæsar*, are a match for the *Suevi* <sup>e</sup>.

MANY ills, says *Dione* in *Homer* to *Venus* wounded by *Diomede*, many ills, my daughter, have the gods inflicted on men: And many ills, in return, have men inflicted on the gods <sup>f</sup>. We

<sup>a</sup> Pere le Comte. <sup>b</sup> Regnard, Voyage de Lapponie.  
<sup>c</sup> Diod. Sic. lib. i. Lucian. de Sacrificiis. *Ovid.* alludes to the same tradition, *Metam.* lib. v. l. 321. So also *Manilius*, lib. iv. <sup>d</sup> Herodot. lib. i. <sup>e</sup> *Cæsar*. *Comment.* de bell. Gallico, lib. iv. <sup>f</sup> Lib. ix. 382.

need

need but open any classic author to meet with these gross representations of the deities; and *Longinus* <sup>a</sup> with reason observes, that such ideas of the divine nature, if literally taken, contain a true atheism.

SOME writers <sup>b</sup> have been surpris'd, that the impieties of *Aristophanes* should have been tolerated, nay publickly acted and applauded, by the *Athenians*; a people so superstitious and so jealous of the public religion, that, at that very time, they put *Socrates* to death for his imagined incredulity. But these writers consider not, that the ludicrous, familiar images, under which the gods are represented by that comic poet, instead of appearing impious, were the genuine lights, in which the ancients conceived their divinities. What conduct can be more criminal or mean, than that of *Jupiter* in the *Amphitryon*? Yet that play, which represented his gallant exploits, was supposed so agreeable to him, that it was always acted in *Rome* by public authority, when the State was threatened with pestilence, famine, or any general calamity <sup>c</sup>. The *Romans* supposed, that, like all old

<sup>a</sup> Cap. ix. <sup>b</sup> Pere Brumoy, Theatre des Grecs; & Fontenelle, Histoire des Oracles. <sup>c</sup> Arnob. lib. vii.



letchers, he would be highly pleased with the rehearsal of his former feats of activity and vigour, and that no topic was so proper, upon which to flatter his pride and vanity.

THE *Lacedæmonians*, says *Xenophon*<sup>a</sup>, always, during war, put up their petitions very early in the morning, in order to be beforehand with their enemies; and by being the first solicitors, pre-engage the gods in their favour. We may gather from *Seneca*<sup>b</sup>, that it was usual for the votaries in the temples, to make interest with the beadles or sextons, in order to have a seat near the image of the deity, that they might be the best heard in their prayers and applications to him. The *Tyrians*, when besieged by *Alexander*, threw chains on the statue of *Hercules*, to prevent that deity from deserting to the enemy<sup>c</sup>. *Augustus*, having twice lost his fleet by storms, forbade *Neptune* to be carried in procession along with the other gods; and fancied, that he had sufficiently revenged himself by that expedient<sup>d</sup>. After *Germanicus's* death, the people were so enraged at their gods, that they stoned

<sup>a</sup> De Laced. Rep.  
Curtius, lib. iv. cap. 3.  
in vita Aug. cap. 16.

<sup>b</sup> Epist. xli.  
Diod. Sic. lib. xvii.

<sup>c</sup> Quint.  
<sup>d</sup> Sueton.

them

them in their temples; and openly renounced all allegiance to them<sup>a</sup>.

To ascribe the origin and fabric of the universe to these imperfect beings never enters into the imagination of any polytheist or idolater. *Hesiod*, whose writings, along with those of *Homer*, contained the canonical system of the heathens<sup>b</sup>; *Hesiod*, I say, supposes gods and men to have sprung equally from the unknown powers of nature<sup>c</sup>. And thro' the whole theogony of that author, *Pandora* is the only instance of creation or a voluntary production; and she too was formed by the gods merely from despight to *Prometheus*, who had furnished men with stolen fire from the celestial regions<sup>d</sup>. The ancient mythologists, indeed, seem throughout to have rather embraced the idea of generation than that of creation, or formation; and to have thence accounted for the origin of this universe.

*OVID*, who lived in a learned age, and had been instructed by philosophers in the principles of a

<sup>a</sup> Id. in vita Cal. cap. 5.

<sup>b</sup> Herodot. lib. ii. Lucian.

*Jupiter confutatus, de luciu Saturn. &c.*

<sup>c</sup> Ως ομο-

θερ γενεασι θεοι ανθρωποι. Hes. Opera & Dies l. 108.

<sup>d</sup> Theog. l. 570.

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divine

divine creation or formation of the world; finding, that such an idea would not agree with the popular mythology, which he delivers, leaves it, in a manner, loose and detached from his system. *Quisquis fuit ille Deorum* <sup>a</sup>: Which-ever of the gods it was, says he, that dissipated the chaos, and introduced order into the universe. It could neither be *Saturn*, he knew, nor *Jupiter*, nor *Neptune*, nor any of the received deities of paganism. His theological system had taught him nothing upon that head, and he leaves the matter equally undetermined.

*Diodorus Siculus* <sup>b</sup>, beginning his work with an enumeration of the most reasonable opinions concerning the origin of the world, makes no mention of a deity or intelligent mind; tho' it is evident from his history, that that author had a much greater proneness to superstition than to irreligion. And in another passage <sup>c</sup>, talking of the *Ichthyophages*, a nation in *India*, he says, that there being so great difficulty in accounting for their descent, we must conclude them to be *aborigines*, without any beginning of their generation, propagating their race from all eternity;

<sup>a</sup> *Metamorph.* lib. i. l. 32.

<sup>b</sup> *Lib.* i.

<sup>c</sup> *Id.* *ibid.*

as some of the physiologers, in treating of the origin of nature, have justly observed. "But in such subjects as these," adds the historian, "which exceed all human capacity, it may well happen, that those, who discourse the most, know the least; reaching a specious appearance of truth in their reasonings, while extremely wide of the real truth and matter of fact."

A strange sentiment in our eyes, to be embraced by a profest and zealous religionist! But it was merely by accident, that the question concerning the origin of the world did ever in antient times enter into religious systems, or was treated of by theologers. The philosophers alone made profession of delivering systems of this nature; and it was pretty late too before these bethought themselves of having recourse to a mind or supreme intelligence, as the first cause of all. So far was it from being esteemed

<sup>a</sup> The same author, who can thus account for the origin of the world without a Deity, esteems it impious to explain from physical causes, the common accidents of life, earthquakes, inundations, and tempests; and devoutly ascribes these to the anger of *Jupiter* or *Neptune*. A plain proof, whence he derived his ideas of religion. See lib. xv. pag. 364. Ex edit. Rhodomanni.

prophane in those days to account for the origin of things without a deity, that *Thales*, *Anaximenes*, *Heraclitus*, and others, who embraced that system of cosmogony, past unquestioned; while *Anaxagoras*, the first undoubted theist among the philosophers, was perhaps the first that ever was accused of atheism <sup>a</sup>.

WE are told by *Sextus Empiricus* <sup>b</sup>, that *Epicurus*, when a boy, reading with his preceptor these verses of *Hesiod*:

Eldest of beings, *chaos* first arose;

Next *earth*, wide-stretcht, the seat of all.

the young scholar first betrayed his inquisitive genius, by asking, *And chaos whence?* But was

<sup>a</sup> It will be easy to give a reason, why *Thales*, *Anaximander*, and those early philosophers, who really were atheists, might be very orthodox in the pagan creed; and why *Anaxagoras* and *Socrates*, tho' real theists, must naturally, in antient times, be esteemed impious. The blind, unguided powers of nature, if they could produce men, might also produce such beings as *Jupiter* and *Neptune*, who being the most powerful, intelligent existences in the world, would be proper objects of worship. But where a supreme intelligence, the first cause of all, is admitted, these capricious beings, if they exist at all, must appear very subordinate and dependent, and consequently be excluded from the rank of deities. *Plato* (de Leg. lib. x.) assigns this reason of the imputation thrown on *Anaxagoras*, viz. his denying the divinity of the stars, planets, and other created objects.

<sup>b</sup> *Adversus Mathem.* lib. ix.

told

told by his preceptor, that he must have recourse to the philosophers for a solution of such questions. And from this hint, *Epicurus* left philology and all other studies, in order to betake himself to that science, whence alone he expected satisfaction with regard to these sublime subjects.

THE common people were never likely to push their researches so far, or derive from reasoning their systems of religion; when philologists and mythologists, we see, scarce ever discovered so much penetration. And even the philosophers, who discoursed of such topics, readily assented to the grossest theory, and admitted the joint origin of gods and men from night and chaos; from fire, water, air, or whatever they established to be the ruling element.

NOR was it only on their first origin, that the gods were supposed dependent on the powers of nature. Thro' the whole period of their existence, they were subjected to the dominion of fate or destiny. *Think of the force of necessity*, says *Agrippa* to the Roman people, *that force, to which even the gods must submit* <sup>a</sup>. And

<sup>a</sup> *Dionys. Halic.* lib. vi.

the younger *Pliny* <sup>a</sup>, suitable to this way of reasoning, tells us, that, amidst the darkness, horror, and confusion, which ensued upon the first eruption of *Vesuvius*, several concluded, that all nature was going to wrack, and that gods and men were perishing in one common ruin.

It is great complaisance, indeed, if we dignify with the name of religion such an imperfect system of theology, and put it on a level with latter systems, which are founded on principles more just and more sublime. For my part, I can scarce allow the principles even of *Marcus Aurelius*, *Plutarch*, and some other *Stoics* and *Academics*, tho' infinitely more refined than the pagan superstition, to be worthy of the honourable denomination of theism. For if the mythology of the heathens resemble the antient *European* system of spiritual beings, excluding God and angels, and leaving only fairies and sprites; the creed of these philosophers may justly be said to exclude a deity, and to leave only angels and fairies.

<sup>a</sup> Epist. lib. vi.

## V.

BUT it is chiefly our present business to consider the gross polytheism and idolatry of the vulgar, and to trace all its various appearances, in the principles of human nature, whence they are derived.

WHOEVER learns, by argument, the existence of invisible, intelligent power, must reason from the admirable contrivance of natural objects, and must suppose the world to be the workmanship of that divine being, the original cause of all things. But the vulgar polytheist, so far from admitting that idea, deifies every part of the universe, and conceives all the conspicuous productions of nature to be themselves so many real divinities. The sun, moon, and stars are all gods, according to his system: Fountains are inhabited by nymphs, and trees by hamadryads: Even monkeys, dogs, cats, and other animals often become sacred in his eyes, and strike him with a religious veneration. And thus, however strong men's propensity to believe invisible, intelligent power in nature, their propensity is equally strong to rest their  
C 6 attention

attention on sensible, visible objects; and in order to reconcile these opposite inclinations, they are led to unite the invisible power with some visible object.

THE distribution also of distinct provinces to the several deities is apt to cause some allegory, both physical and moral, to enter into the vulgar systems of polytheism. The god of war will naturally be represented as furious, cruel, and impetuous: The god of poetry as elegant, polite, and amiable: The god of merchandise, especially in early times, as thievish and deceitful. The allegories, supposed in *Homer* and other mythologists, I allow, have been often so strained, that men of sense are apt entirely to reject them, and to consider them as the product merely of the fancy and conceit of critics and commentators. But that allegory really has place in the heathen mythology is undeniable even on the least reflection. *Cupid* the son of *Venus*; the *Muses* the daughters of memory; *Prometheus* the wise brother, and *Epimetheus* the foolish; *Hygieia* or the goddess of health descended from *Æsculapius* or the god of physic: Who sees not, in these, and in many other instances, the plain traces of allegory?

gory? When a god is supposed to preside over any passion, event, or system of actions; it is almost unavoidable to give him a genealogy, attributes, and adventures, suitable to his supposed powers and influence; and to carry on that similitude and comparison, which is naturally so agreeable to the mind of man.

ALLEGORIES, indeed, entirely perfect, we ought not to expect as the products of ignorance and superstition; there being no work of genius, that requires a nicer hand, or has been more rarely executed with success. That *Fear* and *Terror* are the sons of *Mars* is just; but why by *Venus* <sup>a</sup>? That *Harmony* is the daughter of *Venus* is regular; but why by *Mars* <sup>b</sup>? That *Sleep* is the brother of *Death* is suitable; but why describe him as enamoured of one of the *Graces* <sup>c</sup>? And since the ancient mythologists fall into mistakes so gross and obvious, we have no reason surely to expect such refined and long-spun allegories, as some have endeavoured to deduce from their fictions <sup>d</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Hesiod. Theog. l. 935.

<sup>b</sup> Id. ibid. & Plut. in vita Pelop.

<sup>c</sup> Iliad. xiv. 267.

<sup>d</sup> *Lucretius* was plainly seduced by the strong appearance of allegory, which is observable in the pagan fictions. He first addresses himself to *Venus* as to that generating power, which

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THE deities of the vulgar are so little superior to human creatures, that where men are affected with strong sentiments of veneration or gratitude for any hero or public benefactor; nothing can be more natural than to convert him into a god, and fill the heavens, after this manner, with continual recruits from amongst mankind. Most of the divinities of the antient world are supposed to have once been men, and to have been beholden for their *apotheosis* to the admiration and affection of the people. And the real history of their adventures, corrupted by tradition, and elevated by the marvellous, became a plentiful source of fable; especially in passing thro' the hands of poets, allegorists, and priests, who successively improved upon the wonder and astonishment of the ignorant multitude.

PAINTERS too and sculptors came in for their share of profit in the sacred mysteries; and furnishing men with sensible representations of their

animates, renews, and beautifies the universe: But is soon betrayed by the mythology into incoherencies, while he prays to that allegorical personage to appease the furies of her lover, *Mars*: An idea not drawn from allegory, but from the popular religion, and which *Lucretius*, as an *Epicurean*, could not consistently admit of.

divinities,

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divinities, whom they clothed in human figures, gave great increase to the public devotion, and determined its object. It was probably for want of these arts in rude and barbarous ages, that men deified plants, animals, and even brute, unorganized matter; and rather than be without a sensible object of worship, affixed divinity to such ungainly forms. Could any statuary of *Syria*, in early times, have formed a just figure of *Apollo*, the conic stone, *Heliogabalus*, had never become the object of such profound adoration, and been received as a representation of the solar deity <sup>a</sup>.

STILPO was banished by the council of *Areopagus* for affirming that the *Minerva* in the citadel was no divinity; but the workmanship of *Phidias*, the sculptor <sup>b</sup>. What degree of reason may we expect in the religious belief of the vulgar in other nations; when *Athenians* and *Areopagites* could entertain such gross conceptions?

<sup>a</sup> Herodian. lib. 7. *Jupiter Ammon* is represented by *Curtius* as a deity of the same kind, lib. iv. cap. 7. The *Arabians* and *Pessinuntians* adored also shapeless, unformed stones as their deity. Arnob. lib. vi. So much did their folly exceed that of the *Egyptians*.  
<sup>b</sup> Diog. Laert. lib. ii.

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THESE then are the general principles of polytheism, founded in human nature, and little or nothing dependent on caprice and accident. As the *causes*, which bestow on us happiness or misery, are, in general, very unknown and uncertain, our anxious concern endeavours to attain a determinate idea of them; and finds no better expedient than to represent them as intelligent, voluntary agents, like ourselves; only somewhat superior in power and wisdom. The limited influence of these agents, and their great proximity to human weakness, introduce the various distribution and division of their authority; and thereby give rise to allegory. The same principles naturally deify mortals, superior in power, courage, or understanding, and produce hero-worship; along with fabulous history and mythological tradition, in all its wild and unaccountable forms. And as an invisible spiritual intelligence is an object too refined for vulgar apprehension, men naturally affix it to some sensible representation; such as either the more conspicuous parts of nature, or the statues, images, and pictures, which a more refined age forms of its divinities.

ALMOST

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ALMOST all idolaters, of whatever age or country, concur in these general principles and conceptions; and even the particular characters and provinces, which they assign to their deities are not extremely different. The *Greek* and *Roman* travellers and conquerors, without much difficulty, found their own deities every where; and said, this is *Mercury*, that *Venus*; this *Mars*, that *Neptune*; by whatever titles the strange gods may be denominated. The goddess *Hertha* of our *Saxon* ancestors seems to be no other, according to *Tacitus*<sup>b</sup>, than the *Mater Tellus* of the *Romans*; and his conjecture was evidently just.

<sup>a</sup> See *Cæsar* of the religion of the Gauls, *De bello Gallico*, lib. vi.

<sup>b</sup> *De moribus Germ.*

VI. THE

## VI.

THE doctrine of one supreme deity, the author of nature, is very antient, has spread itself over great and populous nations, and among them has been embraced by all ranks and condition of persons: But whoever thinks that it has owed its success to the prevalent force of those invincible reasons, on which it is undoubtedly founded, would show himself little acquainted with the ignorance and stupidity of the people, and their incurable prejudices in favour of their particular superstitions. Even at this day, and in *Europe*, ask any of the vulgar, why he believes in an omnipotent creator of the world; he will never mention the beauty of final causes, of which he is wholly ignorant: He will not hold out his hand, and bid you contemplate the suppleness and variety of joints in his fingers, their bending all one way, the counterpoise which they receive from the thumb, the softness and fleshy parts of the inside of his hand, with all the other circumstances, which render that member fit for the use, to which it was destined. To these he has been long accustomed; and he beholds them with listlessness  
and

and unconcern. He will tell you of the sudden and unexpected death of such a one: The fall and bruise of such another: The excessive drought of this season: The cold and rains of another. These he ascribes to the immediate operation of providence: And such events, as, with good reasoners, are the chief difficulties in admitting a supreme intelligence, are with him the sole arguments for it.

MANY theists, even the most zealous and refined, have denied a *particular* providence, and have asserted, that the Sovereign mind or first principle of all things, having fixt general laws, by which nature is governed, gives free and uninterrupted course to these laws, and disturbs not, at every turn, the settled order of events, by particular volitions. From the beautiful connexion, say they, and rigid observance of established rules, we draw the chief argument for theism; and from the same principles are enabled to answer the principal objections against it. But so little is this understood by the generality of mankind, that, wherever they observe any one to ascribe all events to natural causes, and to remove the particular interposal of a deity, they are apt to suspect him of the grossest infidelity.



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delity. *A little philosophy, says my Lord Bacon, makes men atheists: A great deal reconciles them to religion.* For men, being taught, by superstitious prejudices, to lay the stress on a wrong place; when that fails them, and they discover, by a little reflection, that the course of nature is regular and uniform, their whole faith totters, and falls to ruin. But being taught, by more reflection, that this very regularity and uniformity is the strongest proof of design and of a supreme intelligence, they return to that belief, which they had deserted; and they are now able to establish it on a firmer and more durable foundation.

CONVULSIONS in nature, disorders, prodigies, miracles, tho' the most opposite to the plan of a wise superintendent, impress mankind with the strongest sentiments of religion; the causes of events seeming then the most unknown and unaccountable. Madness, fury, rage, and an inflamed imagination, tho' they sink men nearest the level of beasts, are, for a like reason, often supposed to be the only dispositions, in which we can have any immediate communication with the deity.

WE

## NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION. 45

WE may conclude, therefore, upon the whole, that since the vulgar, in nations, which have embraced the doctrine of theism, still build it upon irrational and superstitious opinions, they are never led into that opinion by any process of argument, but by a certain train of thinking, more suitable to their genius and capacity.

IT may readily happen, in an idolatrous nation, that, tho' men admit the existence of several limited deities, yet may there be some one god, whom, in a particular manner, they make the object of their worship and adoration. They may either suppose, that, in the distribution of power and territory among the gods, their nation was subjected to the jurisdiction of that particular deity; or reducing heavenly objects to the model of things below, they may represent one god as the prince or supreme magistrate of the rest, who, tho' of the same nature, rules them with an authority, like that which an earthly sovereign exercises over his subjects and vassals. Whether this god, therefore, be considered as their peculiar patron, or as the general sovereign of heaven, his votaries will endeavour, by every act, to insinuate themselves into his favour; and supposing him to be pleased,

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like themselves, with praise and flattery, there is no eulogy or exaggeration, which will be spared in their addresses to him. In proportion as men's fears or distresses become more urgent, they still invent new strains of adulation; and even he who out-does his predecessors, in swelling up the titles of his divinity, is sure to be out-done by his successors, in newer and more pompous epithets of praise. Thus they proceed; till at last they arrive at infinity itself, beyond which there is no farther progress: And it is well, if, in striving to get farther, and to represent a magnificent simplicity, they run not into inexplicable mystery, and destroy the intelligent nature of their deity; on which alone any rational worship or adoration can be founded. While they confine themselves to the notion of a perfect being, the creator of the world, they coincide, by chance, with the principles of reason and true philosophy; tho' they are guided to that notion, not by reason, of which they are in a great measure incapable, but by the adulation and fears of the most vulgar superstition.

WE often find amongst barbarous nations, and even sometimes amongst civilized, that, when

when every strain of flattery has been exhausted towards arbitrary princes; when every human quality has been applauded to the utmost; their fervile courtiers represent them, at last, as real divinities, and point them out to the people as objects of adoration. How much more natural, therefore, is it, that a limited deity, who at first is supposed only the immediate author of the particular goods and ills in life, should in the end be represented as sovereign maker and modifier of the universe?

EVEN where this notion of a supreme deity is already established; tho' it ought naturally to lessen every other worship, and abate every object of reverence, yet if a nation has entertained the opinion of a subordinate tutelary divinity, faint, or angel; their addresses to that being gradually rise upon them, and encroach on the adoration due to their supreme deity. The virgin *Mary*, ere checked by the reformation, had proceeded, from being merely a good woman to usurp many attributes of the Almighty<sup>a</sup>:

<sup>a</sup> The *Jacobins*, who denied the immaculate conception, have ever been very unhappy in their doctrine, even tho' political reasons have kept the Romish church from condemning it. The *Cordeliers* have run away with all the popularity. But in

God and St. *Nicholas* go hand in hand, in all the prayers and petitions of the *Muscovites*.

THUS the deity, who, from love, converted himself into a bull, in order to carry off *Europa*; and who, from ambition, dethroned his father, *Saturn*, became the *Optimus Maximus* of the heathens. Thus, notwithstanding the sublime ideas suggested by *Moses* and the inspired writers, many vulgar *Jews* seem still to have conceived the supreme Being as a mere topical deity or national protector.

RATHER than relinquish this propensity to adulation, religionists, in all ages, have involved themselves in the greatest absurdities and contradictions.

HOMER, in one passage, calls *Oceanus* and *Tethys* the original parents of all things, con-

the fifteenth Century, as we learn from *Boullainvilliers*, an *Italian Condelier* maintained, that, during the three days, when *Christ* was interred, the hypostatic union was dissolved, and that his human nature was not a proper object of adoration, during that period. Without the art of divination, one might foretel, that so gross and impious a blasphemy would not fail to be anathematized by the people. It was the occasion of great insults on the part of the *Jacobins*; who now got some recompence for their misfortunes in the war about the immaculate conception. See *Histoire abrégée*, pag. 499.

formable

formable to the established mythology and tradition of the *Greeks*: Yet, in other passages, he could not forbear complimenting *Jupiter*, the reigning deity, with that magnificent appellation; and accordingly denominates him the father of gods and men. He forgets, that every temple, every street was full of the ancestors, uncles, brothers, and sisters of this *Jupiter*; who was in reality nothing but an upstart parricide and usurper. A like contradiction is observable in *Hesiod*; and is so much the less excusable, that his professed intention was to deliver a true genealogy of the gods.

WERE there a religion (and we may suspect Mahometanism of this inconsistency) which sometimes painted the deity in the most sublime colours, as the creator of heaven and earth; sometimes degraded him nearly to a level with human creatures in his powers and faculties; while at the same time it ascribed to him suitable infirmities, passions, and partialities of the moral kind: That religion, after it was extinct, would also be cited as an instance of those contradictions, which arise from the gross, vulgar, natural conceptions of mankind, opposed to their continual propensity towards flattery and exaggeration.

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aggeration. Nothing indeed would prove more strongly the divine origin of any religion, than to find (and happily this is the case with Christianity) that it is free from a contradiction, so incident to human nature.

VII. IT

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VII.

IT appears certain, that, tho' the original notions of the vulgar represent the Divinity as a very limited being, and consider him only as the particular cause of health or sickness; plenty or want; prosperity or adversity; yet when more magnificent ideas are urged upon them, they esteem it dangerous to refuse their assent. Will you say, that your deity is finite and bounded in his perfections; may be overcome by a greater force; is subject to human passions, pains, and infirmities; has a beginning, and may have an end? This they dare not affirm; but thinking it safest to comply with the higher encomiums, they endeavour, by an affected raving and devotion, to ingratiate themselves with him. As a confirmation of this, we may observe, that the assent of the vulgar is, in this case, merely verbal, and that they are incapable of conceiving those sublime qualities, which they seemingly attribute to the deity. Their real idea of him, notwithstanding their pompous language, is still as poor and frivolous as ever.

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THAT original intelligence, say the *Magians*, who is the first principle of all things, discovers himself *immediately* to the mind and understanding alone; but has placed the sun as his image in the visible universe; and when that bright luminary diffuses its beams over the earth and the firmament, it is a faint copy of the glory, which resides in the higher heavens. If you would escape the displeasure of this divine being, you must be careful never to set your bare foot upon the ground, nor spit into a fire, nor throw any water upon it, even tho' it were consuming a whole city <sup>a</sup>. Who can express the perfections of the Almighty, say the *Mahometans*? Even the noblest of his works, if compared to him, are but dust and rubbish. How much more must human conception fall short of his infinite perfections? His smile and favour renders men for ever happy; and to obtain it for your children, the best method is to cut off from them, while infants, a little bit of skin, about half the breadth of a farthing. Take two bits of cloath <sup>b</sup>, say the *Roman catholics*, about an inch or an inch and a half square, join them by the corners with two strings or pieces

<sup>a</sup> Hyde de Relig. veterum Persarum, Scapulaire.

<sup>b</sup> Called the

of tape about sixteen inches long, throw this over your head, and make one of the bits of cloath lie upon your breast, and the other upon your back, keeping them next your skin. There is not a better secret for recommending yourself to that infinite Being, who exists from eternity to eternity.

THE *Getes*, commonly called immortal, from their steady belief of the soul's immortality, were genuine theists and unitarians. They affirmed *Zamolxis*, their deity, to be the only true god; and asserted the worship of all other nations to be addressed to mere fictions and chimeras. But were their religious principles any more refined, on account of these magnificent pretensions? Every fifth year they sacrificed a human victim, whom they sent as a messenger to their deity, in order to inform him of their wants and necessities. And when it thundered, they were so provoked, that; in order to return the defiance, they let fly arrows at him, and declined not the combat as unequal. Such at least is the account, which *Herodotus* gives of the theism of the immortal *Getes* <sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> Lib. iv.

## VIII.

IT is remarkable, that the principles of religion have a kind of flux and reflux in the human mind, and that men have a natural tendency to rise from idolatry to theism, and to sink again from theism into idolatry. The vulgar, that is, indeed, all mankind, a few excepted, being ignorant and uninstructed, never elevate their contemplation to the heavens, or penetrate by their disquisitions into the secret structure of vegetable or animal bodies; so as to discover a supreme mind or original providence, which bestowed order on every part of nature. They consider these admirable works in a more confined and selfish view; and finding their own happiness and misery to depend on the secret influence and unforeseen concurrence of external objects, they regard, with perpetual attention, the *unknown causes*, which govern all these natural events, and distribute pleasure and pain, good and ill, by their powerful, but silent, operation. The unknown causes are still appealed to, at every emergence; and in this general appearance or confused image, are the perpetual objects of human hopes and fears,

fears, wishes and apprehensions. By degrees, the active imagination of men, uneasy in this abstract conception of objects, about which it is incessantly employed, begins to render them more particular, and to cloathe them in shapes more suitable to its natural comprehension. It represents them to be sensible, intelligent beings, like mankind; actuated by love and hatred, and flexible by gifts and entreaties, by prayers and sacrifices. Hence the origin of religion: And hence the origin of idolatry or polytheism.

BUT the same anxious concern for happiness, which engenders the idea of these invisible, intelligent powers, allows not mankind to remain long in the first simple conception of them; as powerful, but limited beings; masters of human fate, but slaves to destiny and the course of nature. Men's exaggerated praises and compliments still swell their idea upon them; and elevating their deities to the utmost bounds of perfection, at last beget the attributes of unity and infinity, simplicity and spirituality. Such refined ideas, being somewhat disproportioned to vulgar comprehension, remain not long in their original purity; but require to be supported by the notion of inferior mediators or

subordinate agents, which interpose betwixt mankind and their supreme deity. These demi-gods or middle beings, partaking more of human nature, and being more familiar to us, become the chief objects of devotion, and gradually recal that idolatry, which had been formerly banished by the ardent prayers and paegeyrics of timorous and indigent mortals. But as these idolatrous religions fall every day into grosser and more vulgar conceptions, they at last destroy themselves, and, by the vile representations, which they form of their deities, make the tide turn again towards theism. But so great is the propensity, in this alternate revolution of human sentiments, to return back to idolatry, that the utmost precaution is not able effectually to prevent it. And of this, some theists, particularly the *Jews* and *Mahometans*, have been sensible, as appears by their banishing all the arts of statuary and painting, and not allowing the representations, even of human figures, to be taken by marble or colours; lest the common infirmity of mankind should thence produce idolatry. The feeble apprehensions of men cannot be satisfied with conceiving their deity as a pure spirit and perfect intelligence; and yet their natural terrors keep them from imputing

imputing to him the least shadow of limitation and imperfection. They fluctuate betwixt these opposite sentiments. The same infirmity still drags them downwards, from an omnipotent and spiritual deity to a limited and corporeal one, and from a corporeal and limited deity to a statue or visible representation. The same endeavour at elevation still pushes them upwards, from the statue or material image to the invisible power; and from the invisible power to an infinitely perfect deity, the creator and sovereign of the universe.

## IX.

POLYTHEISM or idolatrous worship, being founded entirely in vulgar traditions, is liable to this great inconvenience, that any practice or opinion, however barbarous or corrupted, may be authorized by it; and full scope is left for knavery to impose on credulity, till morals and humanity be expelled from the religious systems of mankind. At the same time, idolatry is attended with this evident advantage, that, by limiting the powers and functions of its deities, it naturally admits the gods of other sects and nations to a share of divinity, and renders all the various deities, as well as rites, ceremonies, or traditions, compatible with each other<sup>a</sup>. Theism is opposite both in its advan-

<sup>a</sup> *Verrius Flaccus*, cited by *Pliny*, lib. xxviii. cap. 2. affirmed, that it was usual for the *Romans*, before they laid siege to any town, to invoke the tutelar deity of the place, and by promising him equal or greater honours than those he at present enjoyed, bribe him to betray his old friends and votaries. The name of the tutelar deity of *Rome* was for this reason kept a most religious mystery; lest the enemies of the republic should be able, in the same manner, to draw him over to their service. For without the name, they thought, nothing of that kind could be practised. *Pliny* says, that the common form of invocation

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tages and disadvantages. As that system supposes one sole deity, the perfection of reason and goodness, it should, if justly prosecuted, banish every thing frivolous, unreasonable, or inhuman from religious worship, and set before men the most illustrious example, as well as the most commanding motives of justice and benevolence. These mighty advantages are not indeed overballanced, (for that is not possible) but somewhat diminished, by inconveniencies, which, arise from the vices and prejudices of mankind. While one sole object of devotion is acknowledged, the worship of other deities is regarded as absurd and impious. Nay, this unity of object seems naturally to require the unity of faith and ceremonies, and furnishes designing men with a pretext for representing their adversaries as profane, and the subjects of divine as well as human vengeance. For as each sect is positive, that its own faith and worship are entirely acceptable to the deity, and as no one can conceive, that the same being should be pleased with different and opposite rites and principles; the several sects fall naturally into animosity,

was preserved to his time in the ritual of the pontifs. And *Macrobius* has transmitted a copy of it from the secret things of *Sammonicus Serenus*.

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and.



and mutually discharge on each other, that sacred zeal and rancour, the most furious and implacable of all human passions.

THE tolerating spirit of idolaters both in antient and modern times, is very obvious to any one, who is the least conversant in the writings of historians or travellers. When the oracle of *Delphi* was asked, what rites or worship were most acceptable to the gods? Those legally established in each city, replied the oracle<sup>a</sup>. Even priests, in those ages, could, it seems, allow salvation to those of a different communion. The *Romans* commonly adopted the gods of the conquered people; and never disputed the attributes of those topical and national deities, in whose territories they resided. The religious wars and persecutions of the *Egyptian* idolaters are indeed an exception to this rule; but are accounted for by antient authors from reasons very singular and remarkable. Different species of animals were the deities of the different sects of the *Egyptians*; and the deities being in continual war, engaged their votaries in the same contention. The worshippers of dogs could not long remain in peace with the adorers of

<sup>a</sup> Xenoph. Memor. lib. ii.

cats

NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION. 61  
cats or wolves<sup>a</sup>. And where that reason took not place, the *Egyptian* superstition was not so incompatible as is commonly imagined; since we learn from *Herodotus*<sup>b</sup>, that very large contributions were given by *Amasis* towards rebuilding the temple of *Delphi*.

THE intolerance of almost all religions, which have maintained the unity of god, is as remarkable as the contrary principle in polytheists. The implacable, narrow spirit of the *Jews* is well known. *Mahometanism* set out with still more bloody principles; and even to this day, deals out damnation, tho' not fire and faggot, to all other sects. And if, amongst *Christians*, the *English* and *Dutch* have embraced the principles of toleration, this singularity has proceeded from the steady resolution of the civil magistrate, in opposition to the continued efforts of priests and bigots.

THE disciples of *Zoroaster* shut the doors of heaven against all but the *Magians*<sup>c</sup>. Nothing could more obstruct the progress of the *Persian* conquests, than the furious zeal of that nation

<sup>a</sup> Plutarch. de Isid. & Osiride.

<sup>b</sup> Lib. ii. sub fine.

<sup>c</sup> Hyde de Relig. vet. Persarum.

against

against the temples and images of the *Greeks*. And after the overthrow of that empire, we find *Alexander*, as a polytheist, immediately re-establishing the worship of the *Babylonians*, which their former princes, as monotheists, had carefully abolished <sup>a</sup>. Even the blind and devoted attachment of that conqueror to the *Greek* superstition hindered not but he himself sacrificed according to the *Babylonish* rites and ceremonies <sup>b</sup>.

So sociable is polytheism, that the utmost fierceness and aversion, which it meets with in an opposite religion, is scarce able to disgust it, and keep it at a distance. *Augustus* praised extremely the reserve of his grandson, *Caius Cæsar*, when, passing by *Jerusalem*, he deigned not to sacrifice according to the *Jewish* law. But for what reason did *Augustus* so much approve of this conduct? Only, because that religion was by the pagans esteemed ignoble and barbarous <sup>c</sup>.

I may venture to affirm, that few corruptions of idolatry and polytheism are more pernicious to political society than this corruption of

<sup>a</sup> Arrian. de Exped. lib. iii. Id. lib. vii.

<sup>b</sup> Id. ibid.

<sup>c</sup> Sueton. in vita Aug. c. 93.

NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION. 63  
theism <sup>a</sup>, when carried to the utmost height. The human sacrifices of the *Carthaginians*, *Mexicans*, and many barbarous nations <sup>b</sup>, scarce exceed the inquisition and persecutions of *Rome* and *Madrid*. For besides, that the effusion of blood may not be so great in the former case as in the latter; besides this, I say, the human victims, being chosen by lot or by some exterior signs, affect not, in so considerable a degree, the rest of the society. Whereas virtue, knowledge, love of liberty, are the qualities, which call down the fatal vengeance of inquisitors; and when expelled, leave the society in the most shameful ignorance, corruption, and bondage. The illegal murder of one man by a tyrant is more pernicious than the death of a thousand by pestilence, famine, or any unflinishing calamity.

<sup>a</sup> *Corruptio optimi pessima.*

<sup>b</sup> Most nations have fallen into this guilt; tho' perhaps, that impious superstition has never prevailed very much in any civilized nation, unless we except the *Carthaginians*. For the *Tyrans* soon abolished it. A sacrifice is conceived as a present; and any present is delivered to the deity by destroying it and rendering it useless to men; by burning what is solid, pouring out the liquid, and killing the animate. For want of a better way of doing him service, we do ourselves an injury; and fancy that we thereby express, at least, the heartiness of our good will and adoration. Thus our mercenary devotion deceives ourselves, and imagines it deceives the deity.

IN the temple of *Diana* at *Aricia* near *Rome*, whoever murdered the present priest, was legally entitled to be installed his successor\*. A very singular institution! For, however barbarous and bloody the common superstitions often are to the laity, they usually turn to the advantage of the holy order.

\* Strabo, lib. v. Sueton. in vita Cal.

X. FROM

X.

FROM the comparison of theism and idolatry, we may form some other observations, which will also confirm the vulgar observation, that the corruption of the best things gives rise to the worst.

WHERE the deity is represented as infinitely superior to mankind, this belief, tho' altogether just, is apt, when joined with superstitious terrors, to sink the human mind into the lowest submission and abasement, and to represent the monkish virtues of mortification, penance, humility and passive suffering, as the only qualities, which are acceptable to him. But where the gods are conceived to be only a little superior to mankind, and to have been, many of them, advanced from that inferior rank, we are more at our ease in our addresses to them, and may even, without profaneness, aspire sometimes to a rivalry and emulation of them. Hence activity, spirit, courage, magnanimity, love of liberty, and all the virtues, which aggrandize a people.

THE

THE heroes in paganism correspond exactly to the saints in popery and holy dervises in *Mahometanism*. The place of *Hercules*, *Theseus*, *Hector*, *Romulus*, is now supplied by *Dominic*, *Francis*, *Anthony*, and *Benedict*. And instead of the destruction of monsters, the subduing tyrants, the defence of our native country; celestial honours are obtained by whippings and fastings, by cowardice and humility, by abject submission and slavish obedience.

ONE great incitement to the pious *Alexander* in his warlike expeditions was his rivalship of *Hercules* and *Bacchus*, whom he justly pretended to have excelled<sup>a</sup>. *Brasidas*, that generous and noble *Spartan*, after falling in battle, had heroic honours paid him by the inhabitants of *Amphipolis*, whose defence he had embraced<sup>b</sup>. And in general, all founders of states and colonies amongst the *Greeks* were raised to this inferior rank of divinity, by those who reaped the benefit of their labours.

THIS gave rise to the observation of *Machiavel*<sup>c</sup>, that the doctrines of the *Christian* reli-

<sup>a</sup> Arrian. passim.  
<sup>c</sup> Discors. lib. vi.

<sup>b</sup> Thucyd. lib. v.

gion

NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION. 67  
gion (meaning the catholic; for he knew no other) which recommend only passive courage and suffering, had subdued the spirit of mankind, and had fitted them for slavery and subjection. And this observation would certainly be just, were there not many other circumstances in human society, which controul the genius and character of a religion.

BRASIDAS seized a mouse, and being bit by it, let it go. *There is nothing so contemptible, says he, but what may be safe, if it has but courage to defend itself*<sup>a</sup>. *Bellarmino*, patiently and humbly allowed the fleas and other odious vermin to prey upon him. *We shall have heaven, says he, to reward us for our sufferings: But these poor creatures have nothing but the enjoyment of the present life*<sup>b</sup>. Such difference is there betwixt the maxims of a *Greek* hero and a *Catholic* saint.

<sup>a</sup> Plut. Apophth.

<sup>b</sup> Bayle, Article BELLARMINO.

XI. HERE

## XI.

HERE is another observation to the same purpose, and a new proof that the corruption of the best things begets the worst. If we examine, without prejudice, the antient heathen mythology, as contained in the poets, we shall not discover in it any such monstrous absurdity, as we may be apt at first to apprehend. Where is the difficulty of conceiving, that the same powers or principles, whatever they were, which formed this visible world, men and animals, produced also a species of intelligent creatures, of more refined substance and greater authority than the rest? That these creatures may be capricious, revengeful, passionate, voluptuous, is easily conceived; nor is any circumstance more apt, amongst ourselves, to engender such vices, than the licence of absolute authority. And in short, the whole mythological system is so natural, that, in the vast variety of planets and worlds, contained in this universe, it seems more than probable, that, somewhere or other, it is really carried into execution.

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THE chief objection to it with regard to this planet, is, that it is not ascertained by any just reason or authority. The antient tradition, insisted on by the heathen priests and theologers, is but a weak foundation; and transmitted also such a number of contradictory reports, supported, all of them, by equal authority, that it became absolutely impossible to fix a preference amongst them. A few volumes, therefore, must contain all the polemical writings of pagan priests. And their whole theology must consist more of traditional stories and superstitious practices than of philosophical argument and controversy.

BUT where theism forms the fundamental principle of any popular religion, that tenet is so conformable to sound reason, that philosophy is apt to incorporate itself with such a system of theology. And if the other dogmas of that system be contained in a sacred book, such as the Alcoran, or be determined by any visible authority, like that of the Roman pontif, speculative reasoners naturally carry on their assent, and embrace a theory, which has been instilled into them by their earliest education, and which also possesses some degree of consistence and uniformity.

uniformity. But as these appearances do often, all of them, prove deceitful, philosophy will soon find herself very unequally yoked with her new associate; and instead of regulating each principle, as they advance together, she is at every turn perverted to serve the purposes of superstition. For besides the unavoidable incoherencies, which must be reconciled and adjusted; one may safely affirm, that all popular theology, especially the scholastic, has a kind of appetite for absurdity and contradiction. If that theology went not beyond reason and common sense, her doctrines would appear too easy and familiar. Amazement must of necessity be raised: Mystery affected: Darkness and obscurity sought after: And a foundation of merit afforded the devout votaries, who desire an opportunity of subduing their rebellious reason, by the belief of the most unintelligible sophisms.

ECCLESIASTICAL history sufficiently confirms these reflections. When a controversy is started, some people pretend always with certainty to conjecture the issue. Which ever opinion, say they, is most contrary to plain sense is sure to prevail; even where the general interest of the system requires not that decision. Tho' the reproach

reproach of heresy may, for some time, be bandied about amongst the disputants, it always rests at last on the side of reason. Any one, it is pretended, that has but learning enough of this kind to know the definition of *Arian, Pelagian, Erastian, Socinian, Sabellian, Eutychian, Nestorian, Monothelite, &c.* not to mention *Protestant*, whose fate is yet uncertain, will be convinced of the truth of this observation. And thus a system becomes more absurd in the end, merely from its being reasonable and philosophical in the beginning.

To oppose the torrent of scholastic religion by such feeble maxims as these, that *it is impossible for the same thing to be and not to be*, that *the whole is greater than a part*, that *two and three make five*; is pretending to stop the ocean with a bull-rush. Will you set up profane reason against sacred mystery? No punishment is great enough for your impiety. And the same fires, which were kindled for heretics, will serve also for the destruction of philosophers.

## XII.

WE meet every day with people so sceptical with regard to history, that they assert it impossible for any nation ever to believe such absurd principles as those of *Greek* and *Egyptian* paganism; and at the same time so dogmatical with regard to religion, that they think the same absurdities are to be found in no other communions. *Cambyfes* entertained like prejudices; and very impiously ridiculed, and even wounded, *Apis*, the great god of the *Egyptians*, who appeared to his profane senses nothing but a large spotted bull. But *Herodotus*<sup>a</sup> judiciously ascribes this folly of passion to a real madness or disorder of the brain: Otherwise, says the historian, he would never have openly affronted any established worship. For on that head, continues he, every nation are best satisfied with their own, and think they have the advantage over every other nation.

It must be allowed, that the *Roman* catholics are a very learned sect; and that no one

<sup>a</sup> Lib. iii. c. 38.

communion,

communion, but that of the church of *England*, can dispute their being the most learned of all the christian churches: Yet *Averroes*, the famous *Arabian*, who, no doubt, had heard of the *Egyptian* superstitions, declares, that, of all religions, the most absurd and non-sensical is that, whose votaries eat, after having created, their deity.

I BELIEVE, indeed, that there is no tenet in all paganism, which would give so fair a scope to ridicule as this of the *real presence*: For it is so absurd, that it eludes the force of almost all argument. There are even some pleasant stories of that kind, which, tho' somewhat profane, are commonly told by the Catholics themselves. One day, a priest, it is said, gave inadvertently, instead of the sacrament, a counter, which had by accident fallen among the holy wafers. The communicant waited patiently for some time, expecting it would dissolve on his tongue: But finding, that it still remained entire, he took it off. *I wish*, cries he to the priest, *you have not committed some mistake: I wish you have not given me God the Father: He is so hard and tough there is no swallowing him.*

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A FAMOUS

A FAMOUS general, at that time in the *Muscovite* service, having come to *Paris* for the recovery of his wounds; brought along with him a young *Turk*, whom he had taken prisoner. Some of the doctors of the *Sorbonne* (who are altogether as positive as the *Derwives* of *Constantinople*) thinking it a pity, that the poor *Turk* should be damned for want of instruction, solicited *Mustopha* very hard to turn Christian, and promised him, for his encouragement, plenty of good wine in this world, and paradise in the next. These allurements were too powerful to be resisted; and therefore, having been well instructed and catechized, he at last agreed to receive the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's supper. The priest, however, to make every thing sure and solid, still continued his instructions; and began his catechism next day with the usual question, *How many Gods are there?* *None at all*, replies *Benedict*; for that was his new name. *How! None at all!* cries the priest. *To be sure*, said the honest profelyte. *You have told me all along that there is but one God: And yesterday I eat him.*

SUCH

SUCH are the doctrines of our brethren, the Catholics. But to these doctrines we are so accustomed, that we never wonder at them: Tho', in a future age, it will probably become difficult to persuade some nations, that any human, two-legged creature, could ever embrace such principles. And it is a thousand to one, but these nations themselves shall have something full as absurd in their own creed, to which they will give a most implicate and most religious assent.

I LODGED once at *Paris* in the same *hotel* with an ambassador from *Tunis*, who, having past some years at *London*, was returning home that way. One day, I observed his *Moorish* excellency diverting himself under the porch, with surveying the splendid equipages that drove along; when there chanced to pass that way some *Capucin* friars, who had never seen a *Turk*; as he, on his part, tho' accustomed to the *European* dresses, had never seen the grotesque figure of a *Capucin*: And there is no expressing the mutual admiration, with which they inspired each other. Had the chaplain of the embassy entered into a dispute with these *Franciscans*, their reciprocal surprize had been of the same nature. And

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thus all mankind stand staring at one another; and there is no beating it out of their heads, that the turban of the *African* is not just as good or as bad a fashion as the cowl of the *European*. *He is a very honest man*, said the prince of *Sallee*, speaking of *de Ruyter*, *It is a pity he were a Christian*.

How can you worship leeks and onions, we shall suppose a *Sorbonist* to say to a priest of *Sais*? If we worship them, replies the latter; at least, we do not, at the same time, eat them. But what strange objects of adoration are cats and monkies, says the learned doctor? They are at least as good as the reliëts or rotten bones of martyrs, answers his no less learned antagonist. Are you not mad, insists the Catholic, to cut one another's throat about the preference of a cabbage or a cucumber. Yes, says the pagan; I allow it, if you will confess, that all those are still madder, who fight about the preference among volumes of sophistry, ten thousand of which are not equal in value to one cabbage or cucumber <sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> It is strange that the *Egyptian* religion, tho' so absurd, should yet have borne so great a resemblance to the *Jewish*, that ancient writers even of the greatest genius were not able to

EVERY

EVERY by-stander will easily judge (but unfortunately the by-standers are very few) that, if nothing were requisite to establish any popular system, but the exposing the absurdities of other systems, every votary of every superstition could give a sufficient reason for his blind and bigoted attachment to the principles, in which he has been educated. But without so extensive a knowledge, on which to ground this assurance, (and perhaps, better without it) there is not wanting a sufficient stock of religious zeal and faith amongst mankind. *Diodorus Siculus* <sup>b</sup> gives

observe any difference betwixt them. For it is very remarkable, that both *Tacitus* and *Suetonius*, when they mention that decree of the senate, under *Tiberius*, by which the *Egyptian* and *Jewish* profelytes were banished from *Rome*, expressly treat these religions as the same; and it appears, that even the decree itself was founded on that supposition. *Actum est de sacris Ægyptiis, Judaicisque pellendis; factumque patrum consultum, ut quatuor millia libertini generis ea superstitione infecta, quis idonea ætas, in insulam Sardiniam veherentur, coercendis illic latrocinis; et si ob gravitatem cæli interissent, vile damnum: Ceteri cedarent Italia, nisi certam ante diem profanos ritus exuissent.* *Tacit. Ann. lib. ii. c. 85.* *Externas cæremonias, Ægyptios, Judaicosque ritus compefcuit; coactis qui superstitione ea tenebantur, religiosas vestes cum instrumento omni comburere, &c.* *Sueton. Tiber. c. 36.* These wise heathens, observing something in the general air, and genius, and spirit of the two religions to be the same, esteemed the differences of their dogmas too frivolous to deserve any attention.

<sup>b</sup> Lib. i.

a remarkable instance to this purpose, of which he was himself an eye-witness. While *Egypt* lay under the greatest terror of the *Roman* name, a legionary soldier having inadvertently been guilty of the sacrilegious impiety of killing a cat, the whole people rose upon him with the utmost fury; and all the efforts of their prince were not able to save him. The senate and people of *Rome*, I am persuaded, would not, then, have been so delicate with regard to their national deities. They very frankly, a little after that time, voted *Augustus* a place in the celestial mansions; and would have dethroned every god in heaven, for his sake, had he seemed to desire it. *Præsens divus habebitur Augustus*, says *Horace*. That is a very important point: And in other nations and other ages, the same circumstance has not been esteemed altogether indifferent<sup>a</sup>.

NOTWITHSTANDING the sanctity of our holy religion, says *Tully*<sup>b</sup>, no crime is more

<sup>a</sup> When *Louis* the XIVth took on himself the protection of the Jesuites college of *Clermont*, the society ordered the king's arms to be put up over their gate, and took down the cross, in order to make way for it: Which gave occasion to the following epigram:

Sustulit hinc Christi, posuitque insignia Regis:  
Impia gens, alium nescit habere Deum.

<sup>b</sup> De nat. Deor. l. i.

common

common with us than sacrilege: But was it ever heard, that an *Egyptian* violated the temple of a cat, an ibis, or a crocodile? There is no torture, an *Egyptian* would not undergo, says the same author in another place<sup>a</sup>, rather than injure an ibis, an aspic, a cat, a dog, or a crocodile. Thus it is strictly true, what *Dryden* observes

“Of whatfoe'er descent their godhead be,  
“Stock, stone, or other homely pedigree,  
“In his defence his servants are as bold,  
“As if he had been born of beaten gold.”

ABSALOM and ACHITOPHEL.

Nay, the baser the materials are, of which the divinity is composed, the greater devotion is he likely to excite in the breasts of his deluded votaries. They exult in their shame, and make a merit with their deity, in braving, for his sake, all the ridicule and contumely of his enemies. Ten thousand *Croises* enlist themselves under the holy banners, and even openly triumph in those parts of their religion, which their adversaries regard as the most reproachful.

THERE occurs, I own, a difficulty in the *Egyptian* system of theology; as indeed, few

<sup>a</sup> *Tusc. Quæst. lib. v.*

systems are entirely free from difficulties. It is evident, from their method of propagation, that a couple of cats, in fifty years, would stock a whole kingdom; and if that religious veneration were still paid them, it would, in twenty more, not only be easier in *Egypt* to find a god than a man, which *Petronius* says was the case in some parts of *Italy*; but the gods must at last entirely starve the men, and leave themselves neither priests nor votaries remaining. It is probable, therefore, that that wise nation, the most celebrated in antiquity for prudence and sound policy, foreseeing such dangerous consequences, reserved all their worship for the full-grown divinities, and used the freedom to drown the holy spawn or little sucking gods, without any scruple or remorse. And thus the practice of warping the tenets of religion, in order to serve temporal interests, is not, by any means, to be regarded as an invention of these latter ages.

THE learned, philosophical *Varro*, discoursing of religion, pretends not to deliver any thing beyond probabilities and appearances: Such was his good sense and moderation! But the passionate, the zealous *Augustin*, insults the noble *Roman* on his scepticism and reserve, and professes  
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the most thorough belief and assurance<sup>a</sup>. A heathen poet, however, contemporary with the faint, absurdly esteems the religious system of the latter so false, that even the credulity of children, he says, could not engage them to believe it<sup>b</sup>.

Is it strange, when mistakes are so common, to find every one positive and dogmatical? And that the zeal often rises in proportion to the error? *Moverunt*, says *Spartian*, *Et ea tempestate Judæi bellum quod vetabantur mutilare genitalia*<sup>c</sup>.

IF ever there was a nation or a time, in which the public religion lost all authority over mankind, we might expect, that infidelity in *Rome*, during the *Ciceronian* age, would openly have erected its throne, and that *Cicero* himself, in every speech and action, would have been its most declared abettor. But it appears, that, whatever sceptical liberties that great man might use, in his writings or in philosophical conversation; he yet avoided, in the common conduct of life, the imputation of deism and profaneness. Even in his own family, and to his wife, *Terentia*, whom he highly trusted, he

<sup>a</sup> De civitate Dei, l. iii. c. 17.  
Numitiani iter, lib. i. l. 386.

<sup>b</sup> Claudii Rutilii  
In vita Adriani.

was willing to appear a devout religionist; and there remains a letter, address'd to her, in which he seriously desires her to offer sacrifice to *Apollo* and *Æsculapius*, in gratitude for the recovery of his health <sup>a</sup>.

POMPEY'S devotion was much more sincere: In all his conduct, during the civil wars, he paid a great regard to auguries, dreams, and prophecies <sup>b</sup>. *Augustus* was tainted with superstition of every kind. As it is reported of *Milton*, that his poetical genius never flowed with ease and abundance in the spring; so *Augustus* observed, that his own genius for dreaming never was so perfect during that season, nor was so much to be relied on, as during the rest of the year. That great and able emperor was also extremely uneasy when he happened to change his shoes, and put the right foot shoe on the left foot <sup>c</sup>. In short, it cannot be doubted, but the votaries of the established superstition of antiquity were as numerous in every state, as those of the modern religion are at present. Its influence was as universal; tho' it was not so

<sup>a</sup> Lib. xiv. epist. 7.

<sup>b</sup> Cicero de Divin. lib. ii. c. 24.

<sup>c</sup> Sueton. Aug. cap. 90, 91, 92. Plin. lib. ii. cap. 7.

great.

great. As many people gave their assent to it; tho' that assent was not seemingly so strong, precise, and affirmative.

WE may observe, that, notwithstanding the dogmatical, imperious style of all superstition, the conviction of the religionists, in all ages, is more affected than real, and scarce ever approaches, in any degree, to that solid belief and persuasion, which governs us in the common affairs of life. Men dare not avow, even to their own hearts, the doubts, which they entertain on such subjects: They make a merit of implicate faith; and disguise to themselves their real infidelity, by the strongest asseverations and most positive bigotry. But nature is too hard for all their endeavours, and suffers not the obscure, glimmering light, afforded in those shadowy regions, to equal the strong impressions, made by common sense and by experience. The usual course of men's conduct belies their words, and shows, that the assent in these matters is some unaccountable operation of the mind betwixt disbelief and conviction, but approaching much nearer the former than the latter.

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SINCE, therefore, the mind of man appears of so loose and unsteady a contexture, that, even at present, when so many persons find an interest in continually employing on it the chisel and the hammer, yet are they not able to engrave theological tenets with any lasting impression; how much more must this have been the case in antient times, when the retainers to the holy function were so much fewer in comparison? No wonder, that the appearances were then very inconsistent, and that men, on some occasions, might seem determined infidels, and enemies to the established religion, without being so in reality; or at least, without knowing their own minds in that particular.

ANOTHER cause, which rendered the antient religions much looser than the modern, is, that the former were *traditional* and the latter are *scriptural*; and the tradition in the former was complex, contradictory, and, on many occasions, doubtful; so that it could not possibly be reduced to any standard and canon, or afford any determinate articles of faith. The stories of the gods were numberless like the popish legends; and tho' every one, almost, believed a part of these stories, yet no one could believe or know the

the whole: While, at the same time, all must have acknowledged, that no one part stood on a better foundation than the rest. The traditions of different cities and nations were also, on many occasions, directly opposite; and no reason could be found for preferring one to the other. And as there was an infinite number of stories, with regard to which tradition was no way positive; the gradation was insensible, from the most fundamental articles of faith, to those loose and precarious fictions. The pagan religion, therefore, seemed to vanish like a cloud, whenever one approached to it, and examined it piecemeal. It could never be ascertained by any fixt dogmas and principles. And tho' this did not convert the generality of mankind from so absurd a faith; for when will the people be reasonable? yet it made them falter and hesitate more in maintaining their principles, and was even apt to produce, in certain dispositions of mind, some practices and opinions, which had the appearance of determined infidelity.

To which we may add, that the fables of the pagan religion were, of themselves, light, easy, and familiar; without devils or seas of brimstone, or any objects, that could much terrify the

the imagination. Who could forbear smiling, when he thought of the loves of *Mars* and *Venus*, or the amorous frolics of *Jupiter* and *Pan*? In this respect, it was a true poetical religion; if it had not rather too much levity for the graver kinds of poetry. We find that it has been adopted by modern bards; nor have these talked with greater freedom and irreverence of the gods, whom they regarded as fictions, than the antient did of the real objects of their devotion.

THE inference is by no means just, that, because a system of religion has made no deep impression on the minds of a people, it must therefore have been positively rejected by all men of common sense, and that opposite principles, in spite of the prejudices of education, were generally established by argument and reasoning. I know not, but a contrary inference may be more probable. The less importunate and assuming any species of superstition appears, the less will it provoke men's spleen and indignation, or engage them into enquiries concerning its foundation and origin. This in the mean time is obvious, that the empire of all religious faith over the understanding is wavering and

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uncertain,

uncertain, subject to all varieties of humour, and dependent on the present incidents, which strike the imagination. The difference is only in the degrees. An antient will place a stroke of impiety and one of superstition alternately, thro' a whole discourse <sup>a</sup>: A modern often thinks in the same way, tho' he may be more guarded in his expressions.

LUCIAN tells us expressly <sup>b</sup>, that whoever believed not the most ridiculous fables of paganism was esteemed by the people profane and impious. To what purpose, indeed, would that agreeable author have employed the whole force of his wit and satyr against the national religion, had not that religion been generally believed by his countrymen and contemporaries?

<sup>a</sup> Witness this remarkable passage of *Tacitus*: *Præter multiplices rerum humanarum casus, cælo terraque prodigia, & fulminum monitus, & futurorum præsentia, læta, tristia, ambigua, manifesta. Nec enim unquam atrocioribus populi Romani cladibus, magisque justis judiciis approbatum est, non esse curæ Diis securitatem nostram, esse ultionem, Hist. lib. i.* *Augustus's* quarrel with *Neptune* is an instance of the same kind. Had not the emperor believed *Neptune* to be a real being and to have dominion over the sea; where had been the foundation of his anger? And if he believed it, what madness to provoke still farther that deity? The same observation may be made upon *Quintilian's* exclamations, on account of the death of his children, lib. vi. Præf.

<sup>b</sup> *Philopseudes.*

LIVY<sup>a</sup> acknowledges as frankly, as any divine would at present, the common incredulity of his age; but then he condemns it as severely. And who can imagine, that a national superstition, which could delude so great a man, would not also impose on the generality of the people?

THE *Stoics* bestowed many magnificent and even impious epithets on their sage; that he alone was rich, free, a king, and equal to the immortal gods. They forgot to add, that he was not inferior in prudence and understanding to an old woman. For surely nothing can be more pitiful than the sentiments, which that sect entertained with regard to all popular superstitions; while they very seriously agree with the common augurs, that, when a raven croaks from the left, it is a good omen; but a bad one, when a rook makes a noise from the same quarter. *Panætius* was the only *Stoic*, amongst the *Greeks*, who so much as doubted with regard to auguries and divinations<sup>b</sup>. *Marcus Antoninus*<sup>c</sup> tells us, that he himself had received many admonitions from the gods in his sleep. It is true; *Epicætetus*<sup>d</sup> forbids us to regard the

<sup>a</sup> Lib. x. cap. 40.  
& 7.

<sup>c</sup> Lib. i. § 17.

<sup>b</sup> Cicero de Divin. lib. i. cap. 3.

<sup>d</sup> Ench. § 17.

language of rooks and ravens; but it is not, that they do not speak truth: It is only, because they can foretel nothing but the breaking of our neck or the forfeiture of our estate; which are circumstances, says he, that no way concern us. Thus the *Stoics* join a philosophical enthusiasm to a religious superstition. The force of their mind, being all turned to the side of morals, unbent itself in that of religion<sup>a</sup>.

PLATO<sup>b</sup> introduces *Socrates* affirming, that the accusation of impiety raised against him was owing entirely to his rejecting such fables, as those of *Saturn's* castrating his father, *Uranus*, and *Jupiter's* dethroning *Saturn*: Yet in a subsequent dialogue<sup>c</sup>, *Socrates* confesses, that the doctrine of the mortality of the soul was the received opinion of the people. Is there here any contradiction? Yes, surely: But the contradiction is not in *Plato*; it is in the people, whose religious principles in general are always composed of the most discordant parts; especially in an

<sup>a</sup> The *Stoics*, I own, were not quite orthodox in the established religion; but one may see, from these instances, that they went a great way: And the people undoubtedly went every length.

<sup>b</sup> Eutyphro.

<sup>c</sup> Phædo.

age, when superstition fate so easy and light upon them <sup>a</sup>.

<sup>a</sup> *Xenophon's* conduct, as related by himself, is, at once, an incontestable proof of the general credulity of mankind in those ages, and the incoherencies, in all ages, of men's opinions in religious matters. That great captain and philosopher, the disciple of *Socrates*, and one who has delivered some of the most refined sentiments with regard to a deity, gave all the following marks of vulgar, pagan superstition. By *Socrates's* advice, he consulted the oracle of *Delphi*, before he would engage in the expedition of *Cyrus*. De exp. lib. iii. p. 294, ex edit. Leuncl. Sees a dream the night after the generals were seized; which he pays great regard to, but thinks ambiguous. Id. p. 295. He and the whole army regard sneezing as a very lucky omen. Id. p. 300. Has another dream, when he comes to the river *Carrites*, which his fellow general, *Chirotopus*, also pays great regard to. Id. lib. iv. p. 323. The *Greeks* suffering from a cold north wind, sacrifice to it, and the historian observes, that it immediately abated. Id. p. 329. *Xenophon* consults the sacrifices in secret, before he would form any resolution with himself about settling a colony. Lib. v. p. 359. He himself a very skilful augur. Id. p. 361. Is determined by the victims to refuse the sole command of the army, which was offered him. Lib. vi. p. 273. *Cleander*, the *Spartan*, tho' very desirous of it, refuses it for the same reason. Id. p. 392. *Xenophon* mentions an old dream with the interpretation given him, when he first joined *Cyrus*. P. 373. Mentions also the place of *Hercules's* descent into hell as believing it, and says the marks of it are still remaining. Id. p. 375. Had almost starved the army rather than lead to the field against the auspices. Id. p. 382, 383. His friend, *Euclides*, the augur, would not believe that he had brought no money from the expedition; till he (*Euclides*) sacrificed, and then he saw the matter clearly in the *Extra*. Lib. vii. p. 425. The same philosopher, proposing a project of mines for the increase of the *Athenian* revenues, advises them first to

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THE same *Cicero*, who affected, in his own family, to appear a devout religionist, makes no scruple, in a public court of judicature, of treating the doctrine of a future state as a most ridiculous fable, to which no body could give any attention <sup>a</sup>. *Sallust* <sup>b</sup> represents *Cæsar* as speaking the same language in the open senate <sup>c</sup>.

BUT that all these freedoms implied not a total and universal infidelity and scepticism

consult the oracle. De rat. red. p. 932. That all this devotion was not a farce, in order to serve a political purpose, appears both from the facts themselves, and from the genius of that age, when little or nothing could be gained by hypocrisy. Besides, *Xenophon*, as appears from his *Memorabilia*, was a kind of heretic in those times, which no political devotee ever is. It is for the same reason, I maintain, that *Newton*, *Locke*, *Clarke*, &c. being *Arians* or *Socinians*, were very sincere in the creed they profess: And I always oppose this argument to some libertines, who will needs have it, that it was impossible, but that these great philosophers must have been hypocrites.

<sup>a</sup> Pro Cluentio, cap. 61.

<sup>b</sup> De bello Catilin.

<sup>c</sup> *Cicero* (Tusc. Quæst. lib. i. cap. 5, 6.) and *Seneca* (Epist. 24.) as also *Juvenal* (Satyr. 2.) maintain that there is no boy or old woman so ridiculous as to believe the poets in their accounts of a future state. Why then does *Lucretius* so highly exalt his master for freeing us from these terrors? Perhaps the generality of mankind were then in the disposition of *Cephalus* in *Plato* (de Rep. lib. i.) who while he was young and healthful could ridicule these stories; but as soon as he became old and infirm, began to entertain apprehensions of their truth. This, we may observe, not to be unusual even at present.

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amongst the people, is too apparent to be denied. Tho' some parts of the national religion hung loose upon the minds of men, other parts adhered more closely to them: And it was the great business of the sceptical philosophers to show, that there was no more foundation for one than for the other. This is the artifice of *Cotta* in the dialogues concerning *the nature of the gods*. He refutes the whole system of mythology by leading the orthodox, gradually, from the more momentous stories, which were believed, to the more frivolous, which every one ridiculed: From the gods to the goddesses; from the goddesses to the nymphs; from the nymphs to the fawns and satyrs. His master, *Carneades*, had employed the same method of reasoning<sup>a</sup>.

UPON the whole, the greatest and most observable differences betwixt a *traditional, mythological* religion, and a *systematical, scholastic* one, are two: The former is often more reasonable, as consisting only of a multitude of stories, which, however groundless, imply no express absurdity and demonstrative contradic-

<sup>a</sup> Sext. Empir. advers. Mathem. lib. viii.

tion;

tion; and sits also so easy and light on men's minds, that tho' it may be as universally received, it makes no such deep impression on the affections and understanding.

## XIII.

THE primary religion of mankind arises chiefly from an anxious fear of future events; and what ideas will naturally be entertained of invisible, unknown powers, while men lie under dismal apprehensions of any kind, may easily be conceived. Every image of vengeance, severity, cruelty, and malice must occur and augment the ghastliness and horror, which oppresses the amazed religionist. A panic having once seized the mind, the active fancy still farther multiplies the objects of terror; while that profound darkness, or, what is worse, that glimmering light, with which we are invironed, represents the spectres of divinity under the most dreadful appearances imaginable. And no idea of perverse wickedness can be framed, which those terrified devotees do not readily, without scruple, apply to their deity.

THIS appears the natural state of religion, when surveyed in one light. But if we consider, on the other hand, that spirit of praise and eulogy, which necessarily has place in all religions, and which is the consequence of these very  
 terrors,

terrors, we must expect a quite contrary system of theology to prevail. Every virtue, every excellence must be ascribed to the divinity, and no exaggeration be esteemed sufficient to reach those perfections, with which he is endowed. Whatever strains of panegyric can be invented, are immediately embraced, [without consulting any arguments or phænomena. And it is esteemed a sufficient confirmation of them, that they give us more magnificent ideas of the divine object of our worship and adoration.

HERE therefore is a kind of contradiction betwixt the different principles of human nature, which enter into religion. Our natural terrors present the notion of a devilish and malicious deity: Our propensity to praise leads us to acknowledge an excellent and divine. And the influence of these opposite principles are various, according to the different situation of the human understanding.

IN very barbarous and ignorant nations, such as the *Africans* and *Indians*, nay even the *Japoneſe*, who can form no extensive ideas of power and knowledge, worship may be paid to a being, whom they confess to be wicked and detestable;

teffable; tho' they may be cautious, perhaps, of pronouncing this judgment of him in public, or in his temple, where he may be supposed to hear their reproaches.

SUCH rude, imperfect ideas of the divinity adhere long to all idolaters; and it may safely be affirmed, that the *Greeks* themselves never got entirely rid of them. It is remarked by *Xenophon*<sup>a</sup>, in praise of *Socrates*, that that philosopher assented not to the vulgar opinion, which supposed the gods to know some things, and be ignorant of others: He maintained that they knew every thing; what was done, said, or even thought. But as this was a strain of philosophy<sup>b</sup> much above the conception of his countrymen, we need not be surprized, if very frankly, in their books and conversation, they blamed the deities, whom they worshiped in their temples. It is observable, that *Herodotus* in particular scruples not, in many passages, to ascribe *envy* to the gods; a sentiment, of all

<sup>a</sup> Mem. lib. i.

<sup>b</sup> It was considered among the antients, as a very extraordinary, philosophical paradox, that the presence of the gods was not confined to the heavens, but was extended every where; as we learn from *Lucian. Hermotimus sive De scitis.*

others,

others, the most suitable to a mean and devilish nature. The pagan hymns however, sung in public worship, contained nothing but epithets of praise; even while the actions ascribed to the gods were the most barbarous and detestable. When *Timotheus*, the poet, recited a hymn to *Diana*, where he enumerated, with the greatest eulogies, all the actions and attributes of that cruel, capricious goddess: *May your daughter*, said one present, *become such as the deity whom you celebrate*<sup>a</sup>.

BUT as men farther exalt their idea of their divinity; it is often their notion of his power and knowledge only, not of his goodness, which is improved. On the contrary, in proportion to the supposed extent of his science and authority, their terrors naturally augment; while they believe, that no secrecy can conceal them from his scrutiny, and that even the inmost recesses of their breast lie open before him. They must then be careful not to form expressly any sentiment of blame and disapprobation. All must be applause, ravishment, extacy. And while their gloomy apprehensions make them

<sup>a</sup> Plutarch. de Superst.

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ascribe to him measures of conduct, which, in human creatures, would be highly blamed; they must still affect to praise and admire these measures in the object of their devotional addresses. And thus it may safely be affirmed, that many popular religions are really, in the conception of their more vulgar votaries, a species of dæmonism; and the higher the deity is exalted in power and knowledge, the lower of course is he frequently depressed in goodness and benevolence; whatever epithets of praise may be bestowed on him by his amazed adorers. Amongst idolaters, the words may be false, and belie the secret opinion: But amongst more exalted religionists, the opinion itself often contracts a kind of falshood, and belies the inward sentiment. The heart secretly detests such measures of cruel and implacable vengeance; but the judgment dares not but pronounce them perfect and adorable. And the additional misery of this inward struggle aggravates all the other terrors, by which these unhappy victims to superstition are for ever haunted.

LUCIAN<sup>a</sup> observes, that a young man, who reads the history of the gods in *Homer* or *He-*

<sup>a</sup> Necyomantia.

*god,*

*god*, and finds their factions, wars, injustice, incest, adultery, and other immoralities so highly celebrated, is much surprized afterwards, when he comes into the world, to observe, that punishments are by law inflicted on the same actions, which he had been taught to ascribe to superior beings. The contradiction is still perhaps stronger betwixt the representations given us by some latter religions and our natural ideas of generosity, lenity, impartiality, and justice; and in proportion to the multiplied terrors of these religions, the barbarous conceptions of the divinity are multiplied upon us<sup>a</sup>. Nothing can

<sup>a</sup> *Bacchus*, a divine being, is represented by the heathen mythology as the inventor of dancing and the theatre. Plays were antiently, even a part of public worship on the most solemn occasions, and often employed in times of pestilence, to appease the offended deities. But they have been zealously proscribed by the godly in latter ages; and the play-house, according to a learned divine, is the porch of hell.

But in order to show more evidently, that it is possible for a religion to represent the divinity in still a more immoral unamiable light than the antient, we shall cite a long passage from an author of taste and imagination, who was surely no enemy to Christianity. It is the chevalier *Ramsay*, a writer, who had so laudable an inclination to be orthodox, that his reason never found any difficulty, even in the doctrines which freethinkers scruple the most, the trinity, incarnation, and satisfaction: His humanity alone, of which he seems to have had a great stock, rebelled against the doctrines of eternal reprobation and predestination. He expresses himself thus: 'What strange ideas, says he, would an Indian

preserve untainted the genuine principles of morals in our judgment of human conduct,

“ or a Chinese philosopher have of our holy religion, if they  
 “ judged by the schemes given of it by our modern freethinkers,  
 “ and pharisaical doctors of all sects? According to the odious and  
 “ too vulgar system of these incredulous scoffers and credulous  
 “ scriblers, “The God of the Jews is a most cruel, unjust, par-  
 “ tial and faatastical being. He created, about 6000 years  
 “ ago, a man and a woman, and placed them in a fine garden  
 “ of Asia, of which there are no remains. This garden was  
 “ furnished with all sorts of trees, fountains, and flowers. He  
 “ allowed them the use of all the fruits of this beautiful garden,  
 “ except of one, that was planted in the midst thereof, and  
 “ that had in it a secret virtue of preserving them in continual  
 “ health and vigor of body and mind, of exalting their natural  
 “ powers and making them wise. The devil entered into the  
 “ body of a serpent, and solicited the first woman to eat of this  
 “ forbidden fruit; she engaged her husband to do the same. To  
 “ punish this slight curiosity and natural desire of life and know-  
 “ ledge, God not only threw our first parents out of paradise,  
 “ but he condemned all their posterity to temporal misery, and  
 “ the greatest part of them to eternal pains, tho’ the souls of  
 “ these innocent children have no more relation to that of Adam  
 “ than to those of Nero and Mahomet; since, according to the  
 “ scholastic drivellers, fabulists, and mythologists, all souls  
 “ are created pure, and infused immediately into mortal bodies,  
 “ so soon as the fetus is formed. To accomplish the barbarous,  
 “ partial decree of predestination and reprobation, God aban-  
 “ doned all nations to darkness, idolatry and superstition, with-  
 “ out any saving knowledge or salutary graces; unless it was  
 “ one particular nation, whom he chose as his peculiar people.  
 “ This chosen nation was, however, the most stupid, ungrateful,  
 “ rebellious, and perfidious of all nations. After God had thus  
 “ kept the far greater part of all the human species, during

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but the absolute necessity of these principles to the existence of society. If common concep-

“ near 4000 years, in a reprobate state, he changed all of a  
 “ sudden, and took a fancy for other nations, beside the Jews.  
 “ Then he sent his only begotten Son to the world, under a  
 “ human form, to appease his wrath, satisfy his vindictive ju-  
 “ stice, and die for the pardon of sin. Very few nations, how-  
 “ ever, have heard of this gospel; and all the rest, tho’ left in  
 “ invincible ignorance, are damned without exception or any  
 “ possibility of remission. The greatest part of those, who  
 “ have heard of it, have changed only some speculative notions  
 “ about God, and some external forms in worship: For, in  
 “ other respects, the bulk of Christians have continued as cor-  
 “ rupt, as the rest of mankind in their morals; yes, so much  
 “ the more perverse and criminal, that their lights were greater.  
 “ Unless it be a very small select number, all other Christians, like  
 “ the pagans, will be for ever damned; the great sacrifice of-  
 “ fered up for them will become void and of no effect. God  
 “ will take delight for ever in their torments and blasphemies;  
 “ and tho’ he can, by one fiat, change their hearts, yet they will  
 “ remain for ever unconverted and unconvertible, because he will  
 “ be for ever unappeasable and irreconcilable. It is true, that  
 “ all this makes God odious, a hater of souls, rather than a  
 “ lover of them; a cruel, vindictive tyrant, an impotent or a  
 “ wrathful daemon, rather than an all-powerful, beneficent Fa-  
 “ ther of spirits: Yet all this is a mystery. He has secret rea-  
 “ sons for his conduct, that are impenetrable; and tho’ he ap-  
 “ pears unjust and barbarous; yet we must believe the contrary,  
 “ because what is injustice, crime, cruelty, and the blackest  
 “ malice in us, is in him justice, mercy, and sovereign goodness.”  
 “ Thus the incredulous freethinkers, the judaizing Christians, and  
 “ the fatalistic doctors, have disfigured and dishonoured the sublime  
 “ mysteries of our holy faith; thus, they have confounded the nature  
 “ of good and evil; transformed the most monstrous passions into  
 “ divine attributes, and surpassed the pagans in blasphemy, by

tion can indulge princes in a system of ethics, somewhat different from that which should regulate private persons; how much more those superior beings, whose attributes, views, and nature are so totally unknown to us? *Sunt superis sua jura*<sup>a</sup>; The gods have maxims of justice peculiar to themselves.

<sup>a</sup> ascribing to the eternal nature, as perfections, what makes the most horrid crimes amongst men. The grosser pagans contented themselves with divinizing lust, incest, and adultery; but the predestinarian doctors have divinized cruelty, wrath, fury, vengeance, and all the blackest vices. See the chevalier-Ramsay's philosophical principles of natural and revealed religion, Part II. P. 401.

The same author asserts, in other places, that the *Arminian* and *Molinist* schemes serve very little to mend the matter: And having thus thrown himself out of all received sects of Christianity, he is obliged to advance a system of his own, which is a kind of *Origenism*, and supposes the pre-existence of the souls both of men and beasts, and the eternal salvation and conversion of all men, beasts, and devils. But this notion, being quite peculiar to himself, we need not treat of. I thought the opinions of this ingenious author very curious; but I pretend not to warrant the justness of them.

<sup>a</sup> Ovid. *Metam.* lib. ix. 501.

XIV. HERE

## XIV.

HERE I cannot forbear observing a fact, which may be worth the attention of those, who make human nature the object of their enquiry. It is certain, that, in every religion, however sublime the verbal definition, which it gives of its divinity, many of the votaries, perhaps the greatest number, will still seek the divine favour, not by virtue and good morals, which alone can be acceptable to a perfect being, but either by frivolous observances, by intemperate zeal, by rapturous extasies, or by the belief of mysterious and absurd opinions. The least part of the *Sadder*, as well as of the *Pentateuch*, consists in precepts of morality; and we may be assured, that that part was always the least observed and regarded. When the old *Romans* were attacked with a pestilence, they never ascribed their sufferings to their vices, or dreamed of repentance and amendment. They never thought that they were the general robbers of the world, whose ambition and avarice made desolate the earth, and reduced opulent nations to want and beggary. They only created a dictator<sup>a</sup>, in

<sup>a</sup> Called Dictator clavis figendæ causa. T. Livii, l. vii. c. 3.  
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order to drive a nail into a door; and by that means, they thought that they had sufficiently appeased their incensed deity.

IN *Ægina*, one faction entering into a conspiracy, barbarously and treacherously assassinated seven hundred of their fellow-citizens; and carried their fury so far, that, one miserable fugitive having fled to the temple, they cut off his hands, by which he clung to the gates, and carrying him out of holy ground, immediately murdered him. *By this impiety*, says *Herodotus*<sup>a</sup>, (not by the other many cruel assassinations) *they offended the gods, and contracted an inexpiable guilt.*

NAY, if we should suppose, what seldom happens, that a popular religion were found, in which it was expressly declared, that nothing but morality could gain the divine favour; if an order of priests were instituted to inculcate this opinion, in daily sermons, and with all the arts of persuasion; yet so inveterate are the people's prejudices, that for want of some other superstition, they would make the very attendance on these sermons the essentials of religion, rather

<sup>a</sup> Lib. vi.

than

than place them in virtue and good morals. The sublime prologue of *Zaleucus's* laws<sup>a</sup> inspired not the *Locrians*, so far as we can learn, with any sounder notions of the measures of acceptance with the deity, than were familiar to the other *Greeks*.

THIS observation, then, holds universally: But still one may be at some loss to account for it. It is not sufficient to observe, that the people, every where, degrade their deities into a similitude with themselves, and consider them merely as a species of human creatures, somewhat more potent and intelligent. This will not remove the difficulty. For there is no man so stupid, as that, judging by his natural reason, he would not esteem virtue and honesty the most valuable qualities, which any person could possess. Why not ascribe the same sentiment to his deity? Why not make all religion, or the chief part of it, to consist in these attainments?

NOR is it satisfactory to say, that the practice of morality is more difficult than that of superstition; and is therefore rejected. For,

<sup>a</sup> To be found in *Diod. Sic. lib. xii.*

not to mention the excessive penances of the *Brahmans* and *Talapoins*; it is certain, that the *Rhamadan* of the *Turks*, during which the poor wretches, for many days, often in the hottest months of the year, and in some of the hottest climates of the world, remain without eating or drinking from the rising to the setting of the sun; this *Rhamadan*, I say, must be more severe, than the practice of any moral duty, even to the most vicious and depraved of mankind. The four lents of the *Muscovites*, and the austerities of some *Roman Catholics*, appear more disagreeable than meekness and benevolence. In short, all virtue, when men are reconciled to it by ever so little practice, is agreeable: All superstition is for ever odious and burthensome.

PERHAPS, the following account may be received as a true solution of the difficulty. The duties, which a man performs as a friend or parent, seem merely owing to his benefactor or children; nor can he be wanting to these duties, without breaking thro' all the ties of nature and morality. A strong inclination may prompt him to the performance: A sentiment of order and moral beauty joins its force to these natural ties: And the whole man, if truly virtuous,

is drawn to his duty, without any effort or endeavour. Even with regard to the virtues, which are more austere, and more founded on reflection, such as public spirit, filial duty, temperance, or integrity; the moral obligation, in our apprehension, removes all pretence to religious merit; and the virtuous conduct is esteemed no more than what we owe to society and to ourselves. In all this, a superstitious man finds nothing, which he has properly performed for the sake of his deity, or which can peculiarly recommend him to the divine favour and protection. He considers not, that the most genuine method of serving the divinity is by promoting the happiness of his creatures. He still looks out for some more immediate service of the supreme being, in order to allay those terrors, with which he is haunted. And any practice recommended to him, which either serves to no purpose in life, or offers the strongest violence to his natural inclinations; that practice he will the more readily embrace, on account of those very circumstances, which should make him absolutely reject it. It seems the more purely religious, that it proceeds from no mixture of any other motive or consideration. And if, for its sake, he sacrifices much



of his ease and quiet, his claim of merit appears still to rise upon him, in proportion to the zeal and devotion, which he discovers. In restoring a loan, or paying a debt, his divinity is no way beholden to him; because these acts of justice are what he was bound to perform, and what many would have performed, were there no god in the universe. But if he fast a day, or give himself a sound whipping; this has a direct reference, in his opinion, to the service of God. No other motive could engage him to such austerities. By these distinguished marks of devotion, he has now acquired the divine favour; and may expect, in recompence, protection and safety in this world, and eternal happiness in the next.

HENCE the greatest crimes have been found, in many instances, compatible with a superstitious piety and devotion: Hence it is justly regarded as unsafe to draw any certain inference in favour of a man's morals from the fervor or strictness of his religious exercises, even tho' he himself believe them sincere. Nay, it has been observed, that enormities of the blackest dye, have been rather apt to produce superstitious terrors, and encrease the religious passion. *Bo-*  
*milcar,*

*milcar*, having formed a conspiracy for assassinating at once the whole senate of *Carthage*, and invading the liberties of his country, lost the opportunity, from a continual regard to omens and prophecies. *Those who undertake the most criminal and most dangerous enterprizes are commonly the most superstitious*; as an antient historian<sup>a</sup> remarks on this occasion. Their devotion and spiritual faith rise with their fears. *Catiline* was not contented with the established deities, and received rites of his national religion: His anxious terrors made him seek new inventions of this kind<sup>b</sup>; which he never probably had dreamed of, had he remained a good citizen, and obedient to the laws of his country.

To which we may add, that, even after the commission of crimes, there arise remorse and secret horrors, which give no rest to the mind, but make it have recourse to religious rites and ceremonies, as expiations of its offences. Whatever weakens or disorders the internal frame promotes the interests of superstition: And nothing is more destructive to them than a manly,

<sup>a</sup> Diod. Sic. lib. xx.

<sup>b</sup> Cic. Catil. i. Sallust. de bello Catil.

PRO DISSERTATION I.

steddy virtue, which either preserves us from disastrous, melancholy accidents, or teaches us to bear them. During such calm sunshine of the mind, these spectres of false divinity never make their appearance. On the other hand, while we abandon ourselves to the natural, undisciplined suggestions of our timid and anxious hearts, every kind of barbarity is ascribed to the supreme being, from the terrors, with which we are agitated; and every kind of caprice, from the methods which we embrace, in order to appease him. *Barbarity, caprice*; these qualities, however nominally disguised, we may universally observe, to form the ruling character of the deity, in popular religions. Even priests, instead of correcting these depraved ideas of mankind, have often been found ready to foster and encourage them. The more tremendous the divinity is represented, the more tame and submissive do men become to his ministers: And the more unaccountable the measures of acceptance required by him, the more necessary does it become to abandon our natural reason, and yield to their ghostly guidance and direction. And thus it may be allowed, that the artifices of men aggravate our natural infirmities

NATURAL HISTORY OF RELIGION. III

firmities and follies of this kind, but never originally beget them. Their root strikes deeper into the mind, and springs from the essential and universal properties of human nature.

## XV.

THO' the stupidity of men, barbarous and uninstructed, be so great, that they may not see a sovereign author in the more obvious works of nature, to which they are so much familiarized; yet it scarce seems possible, that any one of good understanding should reject that idea, when once it is suggested to him. A purpose, an intention, a design is evident in every thing; and when our comprehension is so far enlarged as to contemplate the first rise of this visible system, we must adopt, with the strongest conviction, the idea of some intelligent cause or author. The uniform maxims too, which prevail thro' the whole frame of the universe, naturally, if not necessarily, lead us to conceive this intelligence as single and undivided, where the prejudices of education oppose not so reasonable a theory. Even the contrarieties of nature, by discovering themselves every where, become proofs of some consistent plan, and establish one single purpose or intention, however inexplicable and incomprehensible.

Good

Good and ill are universally intermingled and confounded; happiness and misery, wisdom and folly, virtue and vice. Nothing is pure and entirely of a piece. All advantages are attended with disadvantages. An universal compensation prevails in all conditions of being and existence. And it is scarce possible for us, by our most chimerical wishes, to form the idea of a station or situation altogether desirable. The draughts of life, according to the poet's fiction, are always mixed from the vessels on each hand of *Jupiter*: Or if any cup be presented altogether pure, it is drawn only, as the same poet tells us, from the left-handed vessel.

THE more exquisite any good is, of which a small specimen is afforded us, the sharper is the evil, allied to it; and few exceptions are found to this uniform law of nature. The most sprightly wit borders on madness; the highest effusions of joy produce the deepest melancholy; the most ravishing pleasures are attended with the most cruel lassitude and disgust; the most flattering hopes make way for the severest disappointments. And in general, no course of life has such safety (for happiness is not to be dreamed of) as the temperate and moderate,

which

which maintains, as far as possible, a mediocrity, and a kind of insensibility, in every thing.

As the good, the great, the sublime, the ravishing are found eminently in the genuine principles of theism; it may be expected, from the analogy of nature, that the base, the absurd, the mean, the terrifying will be discovered equally in religious fictions and chimeras.

THE universal propensity to believe in invisible, intelligent power, if not an original instinct, being at least a general attendant of human nature, it may be considered as a kind of mark or stamp, which the divine workman has set upon his work; and nothing surely can more dignify mankind, than to be thus selected from all the other parts of the creation, and to bear the image or impression of the universal Creator. But consult this image, as it commonly appears in the popular religions of the world. How is the deity disfigured in our representations of him! What caprice, absurdity, and immorality are attributed to him! How much is he degraded even below the character which we should naturally, in common life, ascribe to a man of sense and virtue!

WHAT

WHAT a noble privilege is it of human reason to attain the knowledge of the supreme being; and, from the visible works of nature, be enabled to infer so sublime a principle as its supreme Creator? But turn the reverse of the medal. Survey most nations and most ages. Examine the religious principles, which have, in fact, prevailed in the world. You will scarcely be persuaded, that they are other than sick men's dreams: Or perhaps will regard them more as the playfome whimsies of monkeys in human shape, than the serious, positive, dogmatical asseverations of a being, who dignifies himself with the name of rational.

HEAR the verbal protestations of all men: Nothing they are so certain of as their religious tenets. Examine their lives: You will scarcely think that they repose the smallest confidence in them.

THE greatest and truest zeal gives us no security against hypocrisy: The most open impiety is attended with a secret dread and compunction.

No

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No theological absurdities so glaring as have not, sometimes, been embraced by men of the greatest and most cultivated understanding. No religious precepts so rigorous as have not been adopted by the most voluptuous and most abandoned of men.

*IGNORANCE is the mother of Devotion.* A maxim, that is proverbial, and confirmed by general experience. Look out for a people, entirely devoid of religion: If you find them at all, be assured, that they are but few degrees removed from brutes.

WHAT so pure as some of the morals, included in some theological systems? What so corrupted as some of the practices, to which these systems give rise?

THE comfortable views, exhibited by the belief of futurity, are ravishing and delightful. But how quickly vanish, on the appearance of its terrors, which keep a more firm and durable possession of the human mind?

THE whole is a riddle, an ænigma, an inexplicable mystery. Doubt, uncertainty, suspension

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of judgment appear the only result of our most accurate scrutiny, concerning this subject. But such is the frailty of human reason, and such the irresistible contagion of opinion, that even this deliberate doubt could scarce be upheld; did we not enlarge our view, and opposing one species of superstition to another, set them quarreling; while we ourselves, during their fury and contention, happily make our escape, into the calm, tho' obscure, regions of philosophy.



DISSERTATION II.

OF THE

PASSIONS.



## DISSERTATION II.

### *Of the Passions.*

#### SECT. I.

1. **S**OME objects produce immediately an agreeable sensation, by the original structure of our organs, and are thence denominated **GOOD**; as others, from their immediate disagreeable sensation, acquire the appellation of **EVIL**. Thus moderate warmth is agreeable and good; excessive heat painful and evil.

SOME objects again, by being naturally conformable or contrary to passion, excite an agreeable or painful sensation; and are thence called *Good* or *Evil*. The punishment of an adversary, by gratifying revenge, is good; the sickness of a companion, by affecting friendship, is evil.

2. ALL good or evil, whence-ever it arises, produces various passions and affections, according to the light, in which it is surveyed.

WHEN good is certain or very probable, it produces JOY: When evil is in the same situation, there arises GRIEF or SORROW.

WHEN either good or evil is uncertain, it gives rise to FEAR or HOPE, according to the degrees of uncertainty on one side or the other.

DESIRE arises from good considered simply; and AVERSION, from evil. The WILL exerts itself, when either the presence of the good or absence of the evil may be attained by any action of the mind or body.

3. NONE of these passions seem to contain any thing curious or remarkable, except *Hope* and *Fear*, which, being derived from the probability of any good or evil, are mixt passions, that merit our attention.

PROBA-

PROBABILITY arises from an opposition of contrary chances or causes, by which the mind is not allowed to fix on either side; but is incessantly tost from one to another, and in one moment is determined to consider an object as existent; and in another moment as the contrary. The imagination or understanding, call it which you please, fluctuates betwixt the opposite views; and tho' perhaps it may be oftener turned to one side than the other, it is impossible for it, by reason of the opposition of causes or chances, to rest on either. The *pro* and *con* of the question alternately prevail; and the mind, surveying the objects in their opposite causes, finds such a contrariety as utterly destroys all certainty or established opinion.

SUPPOSE, then, that the object, concerning which we are doubtful, produces either desire or aversion; it is evident, that, according as the mind turns itself to one side or the other, it must feel a momentary impression of joy or sorrow. An object, whose existence we desire, gives satisfaction, when we think of those causes, which produce it; and for the same reason, excites grief or uneasiness, from the opposite consideration. So that, as the understanding,

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in probable questions, is divided betwixt the contrary points of view, the heart must in the same manner be divided betwixt opposite emotions.

Now, if we consider the human mind, we shall observe, that, with regard to the passions, it is not like a wind-instrument of music, which, in running over all the notes, immediately loses the sound when the breath ceases; but rather resembles a string-instrument, where, after each stroke, the vibrations still retain some sound, which gradually and insensibly decays. The imagination is extremely quick and agile; but the passions, in comparison, are slow and restive: For which reason, when any object is presented, which affords a variety of views to the one and emotions to the other; tho' the fancy may change its views with great celerity; each stroke will not produce a clear and distinct note of passion, but the one passion will always be mixt and confounded with the other. According as the probability inclines to good or evil, the passion of grief or joy predominates in the composition; and these passions, being intermingled by means of the  
contrary

contrary views of the imagination, produce by the union the passions of hope or fear.

4. As this theory seems to carry its own evidence along with it, we shall be more concise in our proofs.

THE passions of fear and hope may arise, when the chances are equal on both sides, and no superiority can be discovered in one above the other. Nay, in this situation the passions are rather the strongest, as the mind has then the least foundation to rest upon, and is tost with the greatest uncertainty. Throw in a superior degree of probability to the side of grief, you immediately see that passion diffuse itself over the composition, and tincture it into fear. Encrease the probability, and by that means the grief; the fear prevails still more and more, till at last it runs insensibly, as the joy continually diminishes, into pure grief. After you have brought it to this situation, diminish the grief, by a contrary operation to that, which encreased it, to wit, by diminishing the probability on the melancholy side; and you will see the passion clear every moment, till it changes insensibly

into hope; which again runs, by slow degrees, into joy, as you encrease that part of the composition, by the encrease of the probability. Are not these as plain proofs, that the passions of fear and hope are mixtures of grief and joy, as in optics it is a proof, that a coloured ray of the sun, passing thro' a prism, is a composition of two others, when, as you diminish or encrease the quantity of either, you find it prevail proportionably, more or less, in the composition?

5. PROBABILITY is of two kinds; either when the object is itself uncertain, and to be determined by chance; or when, tho' the object be already certain, yet is it uncertain to our judgment, which finds a number of proofs or presumptions on each side of the question. Both these kinds of probability cause fear and hope; which must proceed from that property, in which they agree; to wit, the uncertainty and fluctuation which they bestow on the passion, by that contrariety of views, which is common to both.

6. IT

6. IT is a probable good or evil, which commonly causes hope or fear; because probability, producing an inconstant and wavering survey of an object, occasions naturally a like mixture and uncertainty of passion. But we may observe, that, wherever, from other causes, this mixture can be produced, the passions of fear and hope will arise, even tho' there be no probability.

AN evil, conceived as barely *possible*, sometimes produces fear; especially if the evil be very great. A man cannot think of excessive pain and torture without trembling, if he runs the least risque of suffering them. The smallness of the probability is compensated by the greatness of the evil.

BUT even *impossible* evils cause fear; as when we tremble on the brink of a precipice, tho' we know ourselves to be in perfect security, and have it in our choice, whether we will advance a step farther. The immediate presence of the evil influences the imagination and produces a species of belief; but being opposed by the reflection on our security, that belief is im-

G 4 mediately

mediately retracted, and causes the same kind of passion, as when, from a contrariety of chances, contrary passions are produced.

EVILS, which are *certain*, have sometimes the same effect as the possible or impossible. A man, in a strong prison, without the least means of escape, trembles at the thoughts of the rack, to which he is sentenced. The evil is here fixed in itself; but the mind has not courage to fix upon it; and this fluctuation gives rise to a passion of a similar appearance with fear.

7. BUT it is not only where good or evil is uncertain as to its *existence*, but also as to its *kind*, that fear or hope arises. If any one were told, that one of his sons is suddenly killed; the passion, occasioned by this event, would not settle into grief, till he got certain information, which of his sons he had lost. Tho' each side of the question produces here the same passion; that passion cannot settle, but receives from the imagination, which is unfixt, a tremulous, unsteady motion, resembling the mixture and contention of grief and joy.

8. THUS

8. THUS all kinds of uncertainty have a strong connexion with fear, even tho' they do not cause any opposition of passions, by the opposite views, which they present to us. Should I leave a friend in any malady, I should feel more anxiety upon his account, than if he were present; tho' perhaps I am not only incapable of giving him assistance, but likewise of judging concerning the event of his sickness. There are a thousand little circumstances of his situation and condition, which I desire to know; and the knowledge of them would prevent that fluctuation and uncertainty, so nearly allied to fear. *Horace* has remarked this phenomenon:

*Ut assidens implumibus pullus avis  
Serpentum allapsus timet,  
Magis reliatis; non, ut adsit, auxili  
Latura plus presentibus.*

A VIRGIN on her bridal-night goes to bed full of fears and apprehensions, tho' she expects nothing but pleasure. The confusion of wishes and joys, the newness and greatness of the unknown event, so embarrass the mind, that it knows not in what image or passion to fix itself.

G 5

9. CON-

9. CONCERNING the mixture of affections, we may remark, in general, that when contrary passions arise from objects no way connected together, they take place alternately. Thus when a man is afflicted for the loss of a law-suit, and joyful for the birth of a son, the mind, running from the agreeable to the calamitous object; with whatever celerity it may perform this motion, can scarcely temper the one affection with the other, and remain betwixt them in a state of indifference.

IT more easily attains that calm situation, when the *same* event is of a mixt nature, and contains something adverse and something prosperous in its different circumstances. For in that case, both the passions, mingling with each other by means of the relation, often become mutually destructive, and leave the mind in perfect tranquillity.

BUT suppose, that the object is not a compound of good and evil, but is considered as probable or improbable in any degree; in that case, the contrary passions will both of them be present at once in the soul, and instead of balancing

ancing and tempering each other, will subsist together, and by their union, produce a third impression or affection, such as hope or fear.

THE influence of the relations of ideas (which we shall afterwards explain more fully) is plainly seen in this affair. In contrary passions, if the objects be *totally different*, the passions are like two opposite liquors in different bottles, which have no influence on each other. If the objects be intimately *connected*, the passions are like an *alkali* or an *acid*, which, being mingled, destroy each other. If the relation be more imperfect, and consists in the *contradictory* views of the *same* object, the passions are like oil and vinegar, which, however mingled, never perfectly unite and incorporate.

THE effect of a mixture of passions, when one of them is predominant and swallows up the other, shall be explained afterwards.

## SECT. II.

1. BESIDES those passions abovementioned, which arise from a direct pursuit of good and aversion to evil, there are others of a more complicated nature, and imply more than one view or consideration. Thus *Pride* is a certain satisfaction in ourselves, on account of some accomplishment or possession, which we enjoy: *Humility*, on the other hand, is a dissatisfaction with ourselves, on account of some defect or infirmity.

LOVE or *Friendship* is a complacency in another, on account of his accomplishments or services: *Hatred*, the contrary.

2. IN these two sets of passions, there is an obvious distinction to be made betwixt the *object* of the passion and its *cause*. The object of pride and humility is self: The cause of the passion is some excellence in the former case; some fault, in the latter. The object of love and hatred is some other person; The causes,

in

in like manner, are either excellencies or faults.

WITH regard to all these passions, the causes are what excite the emotion; the object is what the mind directs its view to when the emotion is excited. Our merit, for instance, raises pride; and it is essential to pride to turn our view on ourself with complacency and satisfaction.

Now as the causes of these passions are very numerous and various, tho' their object be uniform and simple; it may be a subject of curiosity to consider, what that circumstance is, in which all these various causes agree; or, in other words, what is the real, efficient cause of the passion. We shall begin with pride and humility.

3. IN order to explain the causes of these passions, we must reflect on certain properties, which, tho' they have a mighty influence on every operation, both of the understanding and passions, are not commonly much insisted on by philosophers. The first of these is the *association* of ideas, or that principle, by which we  
make

make an easy transition from one idea to another. However uncertain and changeable our thoughts may be, they are not entirely without rule and method in their changes. They usually pass with regularity, from one object, to what resembles it, is contiguous to it, or produced by it<sup>a</sup>. When one idea is present to the imagination; any other, united by these relations, naturally follows it, and enters with more facility, by means of that introduction.

THE *second* property, which I shall observe in the human mind, is a like association of impressions or emotions. All *resembling* impressions are connected together; and no sooner one arises, than the rest naturally follow. Grief and disappointment give rise to anger, anger to envy, envy to malice, and malice to grief again. In like manner, our temper, when elevated with joy, naturally throws itself into love, generosity, courage, pride, and other resembling affections.

In the *third* place, it is observable of these two kinds of association, that they very much

<sup>a</sup> See philosophical Essays. Essay iii.

assist

assist and forward each other, and that the transition is more easily made, where they both concur in the same object. Thus, a man, who, by any injury from another, is very much discomposed and ruffled in his temper, is apt to find a hundred subjects of hatred, discontent, impatience, fear, and other uneasy passions; especially, if he can discover these subjects in or near the person, who was the object of his first emotion. Those principles, which forward the transition of ideas, here concur with those, which operate on the passions; and both, uniting in one action, bestow on the mind a double impulse.

UPON this occasion, I may cite a passage from an elegant writer, who expresses himself in the following manner<sup>a</sup>. “As the fancy delights  
“in every thing, that is great, strange, or  
“beautiful, and is still the more pleased the  
“more it finds of these perfections in the *same*  
“object, so it is capable of receiving new satisfaction by the assistance of another sense.  
“Thus, any continued sound, as the music of  
“birds, or a fall of waters, awakens every

<sup>a</sup> Addison, Spectator, No 412.

“moment

“ moment the mind of the beholder, and makes  
 “ him more attentive to the several beauties of  
 “ the place, that lie before him. Thus, if  
 “ there arises a fragrantcy of smells or perfumes,  
 “ they heighten the pleasure of the imagination,  
 “ and make even the colours and verdure of  
 “ the landscape appear more agreeable; for the  
 “ ideas of both senses recommend each other,  
 “ and are pleasanter together than where they  
 “ enter the mind separately: As the different  
 “ colours of a picture, when they are well dis-  
 “ posed, set off one another, and receive an  
 “ additional beauty from the advantage of the  
 “ situation.” In these phenomena, we may  
 remark the association both of impressions and  
 ideas; as well as the mutual assistance these as-  
 sociations lend to each other.

4. It seems to me, that both these species of relation have place in producing *Pride* or *Humility*, and are the real, efficient causes of the passion.

WITH regard to the first relation, that of ideas, there can be no question. Whatever we are proud of, must, in some manner, be-  
 long

long to us. It is always *our* knowledge, *our* sense, beauty, possessions, family, on which we value ourselves. Self, which is the *object* of the passion, must still be related to that quality or circumstance, which *causes* the passion. There must be a connexion betwixt them; an easy transition of the imagination; or a facility of the conception in passing from one to the other. Where this connexion is wanting, no object can either excite pride or humility; and the more you weaken the connexion, the more you weaken the passion.

5. THE only subject of enquiry is, whether there be a like relation of impressions or sentiments, wherever pride or humility is felt; whether the circumstance, which causes the passion, produces antecedently a sentiment similar to the passion; and whether there be an easy transfusion of the one into the other.

THE feeling or sentiment of pride is agreeable; of humility, painful. An agreeable sensation is, therefore, related to the former; a painful, to the latter. And if we find, after examination, that every object, which produces  
 pride,

pride, produces also a separate pleasure; and every object, that causes humility, excites in like manner a separate uneasiness; we must allow, in that case, that the present theory is fully proved and ascertained. The double relation of ideas and sentiments will be acknowledged incontestible.

6. To begin with personal merit and demerit, the most obvious causes of these passions; it would be entirely foreign to our present purpose to examine the foundation of moral distinctions. It is sufficient to observe, that the foregoing theory concerning the origin of the passions may be defended on any hypothesis. The most probable system, which has been advanced to explain the difference betwixt vice and virtue, is, that either from a primary constitution of nature, or from a sense of public or private interest, certain characters, upon the very view and contemplation, produce uneasiness; and others, in like manner, excite pleasure. The uneasiness and satisfaction, produced in the spectator, are essential to vice and virtue. To approve of a character, is to feel a delight upon its appearance. To disapprove of it, is to be sensible

sible of an uneasiness. The pain and pleasure, therefore, being, in a manner, the primary source of blame or praise, must also be the causes of all their effects; and consequently, the causes of pride and humility, which are the unavoidable attendants of that distinction.

BUT supposing this theory of morals should not be received; it is still evident, that pain and pleasure, if not the sources of moral distinctions, are at least inseparable from them. A generous and noble character affords a satisfaction even in the survey; and when presented to us, tho' only in a poem or fable, never fails to charm and delight us. On the other hand, cruelty and treachery displease from their very nature; nor is it possible ever to reconcile us to these qualities, either in ourselves or others. Virtue, therefore, produces always a pleasure distinct from the pride or self-satisfaction, which attends it: Vice, an uneasiness separate from the humility or remorse.

BUT a high or low conceit of ourselves arises not from those qualities alone of the mind, which, according to common systems of ethics, have been defined parts of moral duty; but from any other,



other, which have a connexion with pleasure or uneasiness. Nothing flatters our vanity more than the talent of pleasing by our wit, good humour, or any other accomplishment; and nothing gives us a more sensible mortification, than a disappointment in any attempt of that kind. No one has ever been able to tell precisely, what *wit* is, and to shew why such a system of thought must be received under that denomination, and such another rejected. It is by taste alone we can decide concerning it; nor are we possess'd of any other standard, by which we can form a judgment of this nature. Now what is this *taste*, from which true and false wit in a manner receive their being, and without which no thought can have a title to either of these denominations? It is plainly nothing but a sensation of pleasure from true wit, and of disgust from false, without our being able to tell the reasons of that satisfaction or uneasiness. The power of exciting these opposite sensations is, therefore, the very essence of true or false wit; and consequently, the cause of that vanity or mortification, which arises from one or the other.

7. BEAUTY of all kinds gives us a peculiar delight and satisfaction; as deformity produces pain, upon whatever subject it may be placed, and whether survey'd in an animate or inanimate object. If the beauty or deformity belong to our own face, shape, or person, this pleasure or uneasiness is converted into pride or humility; as having in this case all the circumstances requisite to produce a perfect transition, according to the present theory.

It would seem, that the very essence of beauty consists in its power of producing pleasure. All its effects, therefore, must proceed from this circumstance: And if beauty is so universally the subject of vanity, it is only from its being the cause of pleasure.

CONCERNING all other bodily accomplishments, we may observe in general, that whatever in ourselves is either useful, beautiful, or surprizing, is an object of pride; and the contrary, of humility. These qualities agree in producing a separate pleasure; and agree in nothing else.

WE are vain of the surprizing adventures which we have met with, the escapes which we have made, the dangers to which we have been exposed; as well as of our surprizing feats of vigour and activity. Hence the origin of vulgar lying; where men, without any interest, and merely out of vanity, heap up a number of extraordinary events, which are either the fictions of their brain; or, if true, have no connexion with themselves. Their fruitful invention supplies them with a variety of adventures; and where that talent is wanting, they appropriate such as belong to others, in order to gratify their vanity: For betwixt that passion, and the sentiment of pleasure, there is always a close connexion.

8. BUT tho' pride and humility have the qualities of our mind and body, that is, of self, for their natural and more immediate causes; we find by experience, that many other objects produce these affections. We found vanity upon houses, gardens, equipage, and other external objects; as well as upon personal merit and accomplishments. This happens when external objects acquire any particular relation to ourselves,

ourselves, and are associated or connected with us. A beautiful fish in the ocean, a well proportioned animal in a forest, and indeed any thing, which neither belongs nor is related to us, has no manner of influence on our vanity; whatever extraordinary qualities it may be endowed with, and whatever degree of surprize and admiration it may naturally occasion. It must be someway associated with us, in order to touch our pride. It's idea must hang, in a manner, upon that of ourselves; and the transition from one to the other must be easy and natural.

MEN are vain of the beauty either of *their* country, or *their* county, or even of *their* parish. Here the idea of beauty plainly produces a pleasure. This pleasure is related to pride. The object or cause of this pleasure is, by the supposition, related to self, the object of pride. By this double relation of sentiments and ideas, a transition is made from one to the other.

MEN are also vain of the temperature of the climate, in which they are born; of the fertility of their native soil; of the goodness of the wines, fruits, or victuals, produced by it; of the softness or force of their language, with  
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other particulars of that kind. These objects have plainly a reference to the pleasures of the senses, and are originally considered as agreeable to the feeling, taste, or hearing. How could they become causes of pride, except by means of that transition above explained?

THERE are some, who discover a vanity of an opposite kind, and affect to depreciate their own country, in comparison of those, to which they have travelled. These persons find, when they are at home, and surrounded with their countrymen, that the strong relation betwixt them and their own nation is shar'd with so many, that it is in a manner lost to them; whereas, that distant relation to a foreign country, which is formed by their having seen it, and lived in it, is augmented by their considering how few have done the same. For this reason, they always admire the beauty, utility, and rarity of what they have met with abroad, above what they find at home.

SINCE we can be vain of a country, climate, or any inanimate object, which bears a relation to us; it is no wonder we should be vain of the qualities of those, who are connected with us

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by blood or friendship. Accordingly we find, that any qualities, which, when belonging to ourselves, produce pride, produce also, in a less degree, the same affection, when discovered in persons, related to us. The beauty, address, merit, credit, and honours of their kindred are carefully displayed by the proud, and are considerable sources of their vanity.

As we are proud of riches in ourselves, we desire, in order to gratify our vanity, that every one, who has any connexion with us, should likewise be possess'd of them, and are ashamed of such as are mean or poor among our friends and relations. Our forefathers being conceived as our nearest relations; every one naturally affects to be of a good family, and to be descended from a long-succeſſion of rich and honourable ancestors.

THOSE, who boast of the antiquity of their families, are glad when they can join this circumstance, that their ancestors, for many generations, have been uninterrupted proprietors of the *same* portion of land, and that their family has never changed its possessions, or been transplanted into any other county or province. It is an additional

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subject

subject of vanity, when they can boast, that these possessions have been transmitted thro' a descent, composed entirely of males, and that the honours and fortune have never past thro' any female. Let us endeavour to explain these phænomena from the foregoing theory.

WHEN any one values himself on the antiquity of his family, the subjects of his vanity are not merely the extent of time and number of ancestors (for in that respect all mankind are alike) but these circumstances, joined to the riches and credit of his ancestors, which are supposed to reflect a lustre on himself, upon account of his connexion with them. Since therefore the passion depends on the connexion, whatever strengthens the connexion must also encrease the passion, and whatever weakens the connexion must diminish the passion. But it is evident, that the sameness of the possessions must strengthen the relation of ideas, arising from blood and kindred, and convey the fancy with greater facility from one generation to another; from the remotest ancestors to their posterity, who are both their heirs and their descendants. By this facility, the sentiment is transmitted more entire, and excites a greater degree of pride and vanity.

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THE case is the same with the transmission of the honours and fortune, thro' a succession of males, without their passing thro' any female. It is an obvious quality of human nature, that the imagination naturally turns to whatever is important and considerable; and where two objects are presented, a small and a great, it usually leaves the former, and dwells entirely on the latter. This is the reason, why children commonly bear their fathers name, and are esteemed to be of a nobler or meaner birth, according to *his* family. And tho' the mother should be possess of superior qualities to the father, as often happens, the *general rule* prevails, notwithstanding the exception, according to the doctrine, which shall be explained afterwards. Nay, even when a superiority of any kind is so great, or when any other reasons have such an effect, as to make the children rather represent the mother's family than the father's, the general rule still retains an efficacy, sufficient to weaken the relation, and make a kind of breach in the line of ancestors. The imagination runs not along them with the same facility, nor is able to transfer the honour and credit of the ancestors to their posterity of the same name and family so readily, as when the

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transition

transition is conformable to the general rules, and passes thro' the male line, from father to son, or from brother to brother.

9. BUT *property*, as it gives us the fullest power and authority over any object, is the relation, which has the greatest influence on these passions.

EVERY thing, belonging to a vain man, is the best that is any where to be found. His houses, equipage, furniture, cloaths, horses, hounds, excel all others in his conceit; and it is easy to observe, that, from the least advantage in any of these, he draws a new subject of pride and vanity. His wine, if you will believe him, has a finer flavour than any other; his cookery is more exquisite; his table more orderly; his servants more expert; the air, in which he lives, more healthful; the soil, which he cultivates, more fertile; his fruits ripen earlier, and in greater perfection: Such a thing is remarkable for it's novelty; such another for it's antiquity: This is the workmanship of a famous artist; that belonged once to such a prince or great man. All objects, in a word, which are useful,

useful, beautiful, or surprizing, or are related to such, may, by means of property, give rise to this passion. These all agree in giving pleasure. This alone is common to them; and therefore must be the quality, that produces the passion, which is their common effect. As every new instance is a new argument, and as the instances are here without number; it would seem, that this theory is sufficiently confirmed by experience.

RICHES imply the power of acquiring whatever is agreeable; and as they comprehend many particular objects of vanity, necessarily become one of the chief causes of that passion.

10. OUR opinions of all kinds are strongly affected by society and sympathy, and it is almost impossible for us to support any principle or sentiment, against the universal consent of every one, with whom we have any friendship or correspondence. But of all our opinions, those, which we form in our own favour; however lofty or presuming; are, at bottom, the frailest, and the most easily shaken by the contradiction.

tradition and opposition of others. Our great concern, in this case, makes us soon alarmed, and keeps our passions upon the watch: Our consciousness of partiality still makes us dread a mistake: And the very difficulty of judging concerning an object, which is never set at a due distance from us, nor is seen in a proper point of view, makes us hearken anxiously to the opinions of others, who are better qualified to form just opinions concerning us. Hence that strong love of fame, with which all mankind are possessed. It is in order to fix and confirm their favourable opinion of themselves, not from any original passion, that they seek the applauses of others. And when a man desires to be praised, it is for the same reason, that a beauty is pleased with surveying herself in a favorable looking-glass, and seeing the reflexion of her own charms.

THO' it be difficult in all points of speculation to distinguish a cause, which encreases an effect, from one, which solely produces it; yet in the present case the phenomena seem pretty strong and satisfactory in confirmation of the foregoing principle.

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WE receive a much greater satisfaction from the approbation of those, whom we ourselves esteem and approve of, than of those, whom we contemn and despise.

WHEN esteem is obtained after a long and intimate acquaintance, it gratifies our vanity in a peculiar manner.

THE suffrage of those, who are shy and backward in giving praise, is attended with an additional relish and enjoyment, if we can obtain it in our favour.

WHERE a great man is nice in his choice of favourites, every one courts with greater earnestness his countenance and protection.

PRAISE never gives us much pleasure, unless it concur with our own opinion, and extol us for those qualities, in which we chiefly excel.

THESE phenomena seem to prove, that the favourable opinions of others are regarded only as authorities, or as confirmations of our own opinion. And if they have more influence in this subject than in any other, it is

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easily accounted for from the nature of the subject.

II. THUS few objects, however related to us, and whatever pleasure they produce, are able to excite a great degree of pride or self-satisfaction; unless they be also obvious to others, and engage the approbation of the spectators. What disposition of mind so desirable as the peaceful, resigned, contented; which readily submits to all the dispensations of providence, and preserves a constant serenity amidst the greatest misfortunes and disappointments? Yet this disposition, tho' acknowledged to be a virtue or excellence, is seldom the foundation of great vanity or self-applause; having no brilliant or exterior lustre, and rather cheering the heart, than animating the behaviour and conversation. The case is the same with many other qualities of the mind, body, or fortune; and this circumstance, as well as the double relations above mentioned, must be admitted to be of consequence in the production of these passions.

A SECOND circumstance, which is of consequence in this affair, is the constancy and duration

tion of the object. What is very casual and inconstant, beyond the common course of human affairs, gives little joy, and less pride. We are not much satisfied with the thing itself; and are still less apt to feel any new degree of self-satisfaction upon its account. We foresee and anticipate its change; which makes us little satisfied with the thing itself: We compare it to ourselves, whose existence is more durable; by which means its inconstancy appears still greater. It seems ridiculous to make ourselves the object of a passion, on account of a quality or possession, which is of so much shorter duration, and attends us during so small a part of our existence.

A THIRD circumstance, not to be neglected, is, that the objects, in order to produce pride or self-value, must be peculiar to us, or at least, common to us with a few others. The advantages of sun-shine, weather, climate, &c. distinguish us not from any of our companions, and give us no preference or superiority. The comparison, which we are every moment apt to make, presents no inference to our advantage; and we still remain, notwithstanding these en-

joyments, on a level with all our friends and acquaintance.

As health and sickness vary incessantly to all men, and there is no one, who is solely or certainly fixed in either; these accidental blessings and calamities are in a manner separated from us, and are not considered as a foundation for vanity or humiliation. But wherever a malady of any kind is so rooted in our constitution, that we no longer entertain any hopes of recovery, from that moment it damps our self-conceit; as is evident in old men, whom nothing mortifies more than the consideration of their age and infirmities. They endeavour, as long as possible, to conceal their blindness and deafness, their rheums and gouts; nor do they ever avow them without reluctance and uneasiness. And tho' young men are not ashamed of every head-ach or cold which they fall into; yet no topic is more proper to mortify human pride, and make us entertain a mean opinion of our nature, than this, that we are every moment of our lives subject to such infirmities. This proves, that bodily pain and sickness are in themselves proper causes of humility; tho' the custom of estimating every thing, by comparison, more than by

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its intrinsic worth and value, makes us overlook those calamities, which we find incident to every one, and causes us to form an idea of our merit and character, independent of them.

WE are ashamed of such maladies as affect others, and are either dangerous or disagreeable to them. Of the epilepsy; because it gives a horror to every one present: Of the itch; because it is infectious: Of the king's evil; because it often goes to posterity. Men always consider the sentiments of others in their judgment of themselves.

A FOURTH circumstance, which has an influence on these passions, is *general rules*; by which we form a notion of different ranks of men, suitable to the power or riches of which they are possessed; and this notion is not changed by any peculiarities of the health or temper of the persons, which may deprive them of all enjoyment in their possessions. Custom readily carries us beyond the just bounds in our passions, as well as in our reasonings.

It may not be amiss to observe on this occasion, that the influence of general rules and

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maxims.



maxims on the passions very much contributes to facilitate the effects of all the principles or internal mechanism, which we here explain. For it seems evident, that, if a person full-grown, and of the same nature with ourselves, were on a sudden transported into our world, he would be very much embarrassed with every object, and would not readily determine what degree of love or hatred, of pride or humility, or of any other passion should be excited by it. The passions are often varied by very inconsiderable principles; and these do not always play with perfect regularity, especially on the first trial. But as custom or practice has brought to light all these principles, and has settled the just value of every thing; this must certainly contribute to the easy production of the passions, and guide us, by means of general established rules, in the proportions, which we ought to observe in preferring one object to another. This remark may, perhaps, serve to obviate difficulties, that may arise concerning some causes, which we here ascribe to particular passions, and which may be esteemed too refined to operate so universally and certainly, as they are found to do.

SECT.

## SECT. III.

I. IN running over all the causes, which produce the passion of pride or that of humility; it would readily occur, that the same circumstance, if transferred from ourself to another person, would render him the object of love or hatred, esteem or contempt. The virtue, genius, beauty, family, riches, and authority of others beget favourable sentiments in their behalf; and their vice, folly, deformity, poverty, and meanness excite the contrary sentiments. The double relation of impressions and ideas still operates on these passions of love and hatred; as on the former of pride and humility. Whatever gives a separate pleasure or pain, and is related to another person or connected with him, makes him the object of our affection or disgust.

HENCE too injury or contempt is one of the greatest sources of hatred; services or esteem of friendship.

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2. SOMETIMES a relation to ourself excites affection towards any person. But there is always here implied a relation of sentiments, without which the other relation would have no influence <sup>a</sup>.

A PERSON, who is related to us, or connected with us, by blood, by similitude of fortune, of adventures, profession, or country, soon becomes an agreeable companion to us; because we enter easily and familiarly into his sentiments and conceptions: Nothing is strange or new to us: Our imagination, passing from self, which is ever intimately present to us, runs smoothly along the relation or connexion, and conceives with a full sympathy the person, who is nearly related to self. He renders himself immediately acceptable, and is at once on an easy footing with us: No distance, no reserve has place, where the person introduced is supposed so closely connected with us.

RELATION has here the same influence as custom or acquaintance, in exciting affection;

<sup>a</sup> The affection of parents to children seems founded on an original instinct: The affection towards other relations depends on the principles here explained.

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and from like causes. The ease and satisfaction, which, in both cases, attend our intercourse or commerce, is the source of the friendship.

3. THE passions of love and hatred are always followed by, or rather conjoined with, benevolence and anger. It is this conjunction, which chiefly distinguishes these affections from pride and humility. For pride and humility are pure emotions in the soul, unattended with any desire, and not immediately exciting us to action. But love and hatred are not compleat within themselves, nor rest in that emotion, which they produce; but carry the mind to something farther. Love is always followed by a desire of happiness to the person beloved, and an aversion to his misery: As hatred produces a desire of the misery, and an aversion to the happiness of the person hated. These opposite desires seem to be originally and primarily conjoined with the passions of love and hatred. It is a constitution of nature, of which we can give no farther explication.

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4. COMPASSION frequently arises, where there is no preceding esteem or friendship; and compassion is an uneasiness in the sufferings of another. It seems to spring from the intimate and strong conception of his sufferings; and our imagination proceeds by degrees, from the lively idea, to the real feeling of another's misery.

MALICE and envy also arise in the mind without any preceding hatred or injury; tho' their tendency is exactly the same with that of anger and ill-will. The comparison of ourselves with others seems the source of envy and malice. The more unhappy another is, the more happy do we ourselves appear in our own conception.

5. THE similar tendency of compassion to that of benevolence, and of envy to anger, forms a very close relation betwixt these two sets of passions; tho' of a different kind from that insisted on above. It is not a resemblance of feeling or sentiment, but a resemblance of tendency or direction. Its effect, however, is the same, in producing an association of passions. Com-  
passion

passion is seldom or never felt without some mixture of tenderness or friendship; and envy is naturally accompanied with anger or ill-will. To desire the happiness of another, from whatever motive, is a good preparative to affection: And to delight in another's misery almost unavoidably begets aversion towards him.

EVEN where interest is the source of our concern, it is commonly attended with the same consequences. A partner is a natural object of friendship; a rival of enmity.

6. POVERTY, meanness, disappointment, produce contempt and dislike: But when these misfortunes are very great, or are represented to us in very strong colours, they excite compassion, and tenderness, and friendship. How is this contradiction to be accounted for? The poverty and meanness of another, in their common appearance, gives us uneasiness, by a species of imperfect sympathy; and this uneasiness produces aversion or dislike, from the resemblance of sentiment. But when we enter more intimately into another's concerns, and wish for his happiness, as well as feel his misery, friend-  
ship

ship or good-will arises, from the similar tendency of the inclinations.

7. IN respect, there is a mixture of humility, along with the esteem or affection: In contempt, a mixture of pride.

THE amorous passion is usually compounded of complacency in beauty, a bodily appetite, and friendship or affection. The close relation of these sentiments is very obvious, as well as their origin from each other, by means of that relation. Were there no other phenomenon to reconcile as to the present theory, this alone, methinks, were sufficient.

SECT.

SECT. IV.

1. THE present theory of the passions depends entirely on the double relations of sentiments and ideas, and the mutual assistance, which these relations lend to each other. It may not, therefore, be improper to illustrate these principles by some farther instances.

2. THE virtues, talents, accomplishments, and possessions of others make us love and esteem them: Because these objects excite a pleasant sensation, which is related to love; and having also a relation or connexion with the person, this union of ideas forwards the union of sentiments, according to the foregoing reasoning.

BUT suppose, that the person, whom we love, is also related to us, by blood, country, or friendship; it is evident, that a species of pride must also be excited by his accomplishments and possessions; there being the same double relation, which we have all along insisted on. The person is related to us, or there is

is an easy transition of thought from him to us; and the sentiments, excited by his advantages and virtues, are agreeable, and consequently related to pride: Accordingly we find, that people are naturally vain of the good qualities or high fortune of their friends and countrymen.

3. BUT it is observable, that, if we reverse the order of the passions, the same effect does not follow. We pass easily from love and affection to pride and vanity; but not from the latter passions to the former, tho' all the relations be the same. We love not those related to us on account of our own merit; tho' they are naturally vain on account of our merit. What is the reason of this difference? The transition of the imagination to ourselves, from objects related to us, is always very easy; both on account of the relation, which facilitates the transition, and because we there pass from remote objects to those which are contiguous. But in passing from ourselves to objects, related to us; tho' the former principle forwards the transition of thought, yet the latter opposes it; and consequently there is not the same easy  
transfusion

transfusion of passions from pride to love as from love to pride.

4. THE virtues, services, and fortune of one man inspire us readily with esteem and affection for another related to him. The son of our friend is naturally entitled to our friendship: The kindred of a very great man value themselves, and are valued by others, on account of that relation. The force of the double relation is here fully displayed.

5. THE following are instances of another kind, where the operation of these principles may still be discovered. Envy arises from a superiority in others; but it is observable, that it is not the great disproportion betwixt us, which excites that passion, but on the contrary, our proximity. A great disproportion cuts off the relation of the ideas, and either keeps us from comparing ourselves with what is remote from us, or diminishes the effects of the comparison.

A POET is not apt to envy a philosopher or a poet of a different kind, of a different nation,  
or

or of a different age. All these differences, if they do not prevent, at least weaken the comparison, and consequently the passion.

THIS too is the reason, why all objects appear great or little, merely by a comparison with those of the same species. A mountain neither magnifies nor diminishes a horse in our eyes: But when a *Flemish* and a *Welch* horse are seen together, the one appears greater and the other less, than when viewed apart.

FROM the same principle we may account for that remark of historians, that any party, in a civil war, or even factious division, always choose to call in a foreign enemy at any hazard rather than submit to their fellow-citizens. *Guicciardin* applies this remark to the wars in *Italy*; where the relations betwixt the different states are, properly speaking, nothing but of name, language, and contiguity. Yet even these relations, when joined with superiority, by making the comparison more natural, make it likewise more grievous, and cause men to search for some other superiority, which may be attended with no relation, and by that means, may have a less sensible influence on the imagination.

imagination. When we cannot break the association, we feel a stronger desire to remove the superiority. This seems to be the reason, why travellers, tho' commonly lavish of their praises to the *Chinese* and *Persians*, take care to depreciate those neighbouring nations, which may stand upon a footing of rivalry with their native country.

6. THE fine arts afford us parallel instances. Should an author compose a treatise, of which one part was serious and profound, another light and humourous; every one would condemn so strange a mixture, and would blame him for the neglect of all rules of art and criticism. Yet we accuse not *Prior* for joining his *Alma* and *Solomon* in the same volume; tho' that amiable poet has succeeded perfectly in the gaiety of the one, as well as in the melancholy of the other. Even suppose the reader should peruse these two compositions without any interval, he would feel little or no difficulty in the change of the passions. Why? but because he considers these performances as entirely different; and by that break in the ideas, breaks the progress of

of the affections, and hinders the one from influencing or contradicting the other.

AN heroic and burlesque design, united in one picture, would be monstrous; tho' we place two pictures of so opposite a character in the same chamber, and even close together, without any scruple.

7. IT needs be no matter of wonder, that the easy transition of the imagination should have such an influence on all the passions. It is this very circumstance, which forms all the relations and connexions amongst objects. We know no real connexion betwixt one thing and another. We know only, that the idea of one thing is associated with that of another, and that the imagination makes an easy transition betwixt them. And as the easy transition of ideas, and that of sentiments mutually assist each other; we might beforehand expect, that this principle must have a mighty influence on all our internal movements and affections. And experience sufficiently confirms the theory.

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FOR, not to repeat all the foregoing instances: Suppose, that I were travelling with a companion thro' a country, to which we are both utter strangers; it is evident, that, if the prospects be beautiful, the roads agreeable, and the fields finely cultivated; this may serve to put me in good humour, both with myself and fellow-traveller. But as the country has no connexion with myself or friend, it can never be the immediate cause either of self-value or of regard to him: And therefore, if I found not the passion on some other object, which bears to one of us a closer relation, my emotions are rather to be considered as the overflowings of an elevated or humane disposition, than as an established passion. But supposing the agreeable prospect before us to be surveyed either from his country-seat or from mine; this new connexion of ideas gives a new direction to the sentiment of pleasure, proceeding from the prospect, and raises the emotion of regard or vanity, according to the nature of the connexion. There is not here, methinks, much room for doubt or difficulty.

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SECT.

## S E C T. V.

1. IT seems evident, that reason, in a strict sense, as meaning the judgment of truth and falshood, can never, of itself, be any motive to the will, and can have no influence but so far as it touches some passion or affection. *Abstract relations* of ideas are the object of curiosity, not of volition. And *matters of fact*, where they are neither good nor evil, where they neither excite desire nor aversion, are totally indifferent; and whether known or unknown, whether mistaken or rightly apprehended, cannot be regarded as any motive to action.

2. WHAT is commonly, in a popular sense, called reason, and is so much recommended in moral discourses, is nothing but a general and a calm passion, which takes a comprehensive and distant view of its object, and actuates the will, without exciting any sensible emotion. A man, we say, is diligent in his profession from reason; that is, from a calm desire of riches and a fortune. A man adheres to justice from reason;

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that is, from a calm regard to a character with himself and others.

3. THE same objects, which recommend themselves to reason in this sense of the word, are also the objects of what we call passion, when they are brought near to us, and acquire some other advantages, either of external situation, or congruity to our internal temper; and by that means, excite a turbulent and sensible emotion. Evil, at a great distance, is avoided, we say, from reason: Evil, near at hand, produces aversion, horror, fear, and is the object of passion.

4. THE common error of metaphysicians has lain in ascribing the direction of the will entirely to one of these principles, and supposing the other to have no influence. Men often act knowingly against their interest: It is not therefore the view of the greatest possible good which always influences them. Men often counteract a violent passion, in prosecution of their distant interests and designs: It is not therefore the present uneasiness alone, which determines them.



In general, we may observe, that both these principles operate on the will; and where they are contrary, that either of them prevails, according to the general character or present disposition of the person. What we call *strength of mind* implies the prevalence of the calm passions above the violent; tho' we may easily observe, that there is no person so constantly possess'd of this virtue, as never, on any occasion, to yield to the sollicitation of violent affections and desires. From these variations of temper proceeds the great difficulty of deciding concerning the future actions and resolutions of men, where there is any contrariety of motives and passions.

SECT.

## S E C T. VI.

I. WE shall here enumerate some of those circumstances, which render a passion calm or violent, which heighten or diminish any emotion.

It is a property in human nature, that any emotion, which attends a passion, is easily converted into it; tho' in their natures they be originally different from, and even contrary to each other. It is true, in order to cause a perfect union amongst passions, and make one produce the other, there is always required a double relation, according to the theory above delivered. But when two passions are already produced by their separate causes, and are both present in the mind, they readily mingle and unite; tho' they have but one relation, and sometimes without any. The predominant passion swallows up the inferior, and converts it into itself. The spirits, when once excited, easily receive a change in their direction; and it is natural to imagine, that this change will come from the prevailing affection. The con-

nexion is in many cases closer betwixt any two passions, than betwixt any passion and indifference.

WHEN a person is once heartily in love, the little faults and caprices of his mistress, the jealousies and quarrels, to which that commerce is so subject; however unpleasant they be, and rather connected with anger and hatred; are yet found, in many instances, to give additional force to the prevailing passion. It is a common artifice of politicians, when they would affect any person very much by a matter of fact, of which they intend to inform him, first to excite his curiosity; delay as long as possible the satisfying it; and by that means raise his anxiety and impatience to the utmost, before they give him a full insight into the business. They know, that his curiosity will precipitate him into the passion, which they purpose to raise, and will assist the object in its influence on the mind. A soldier, advancing to battle, is naturally inspired with courage and confidence, when he thinks on his friends and fellow-soldiers; and is struck with fear and terror, when he reflects on the enemy. Whatever new emotion, therefore, proceeds from the former naturally encreases

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the courage; as the same emotion proceeding from the latter, augments the fear. Hence in martial discipline, the uniformity and lustre of habit, the regularity of figures and motions, with all the pomp and majesty of war, encourage ourselves and our allies; while the same objects in the enemy strike terror into us, tho' agreeable and beautiful in themselves.

HOPE is, in itself, an agreeable passion, and allied to friendship and benevolence; yet is it able sometimes to blow up anger, when that is the predominant passion. *Spes addita suscitatur iras.* Virg.

2. SINCE passions, however independent, are naturally transfused into each other, if they are both present at the same time; it follows, that when good or evil is placed in such a situation as to cause any particular emotion, besides its direct passion of desire or aversion, that latter passion must acquire new force and violence.

3. THIS often happens, when any object excites contrary passions. For it is observable,

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that

that an opposition of passions commonly causes a new emotion in the spirits and produces more disorder than the concurrence of any two affections of equal force. This new emotion is easily converted into the predominant passion, and in many instances, is observed to encrease its violence, beyond the pitch, at which it would have arrived, had it met with no opposition. Hence we naturally desire what is forbid, and often take a pleasure in performing actions, merely because they are unlawful. The notion of duty, when opposite to the passions, is not always able to overcome them; and when it fails of that influence, is apt rather to encrease and irritate them, by producing an opposition in our motives and principles.

4. THE same effect follows, whether the opposition arises from internal motives or external obstacles. The passion commonly acquires new force in both cases. The efforts, which the mind makes to surmount the obstacle, excite the spirits, and enliven the passion.

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5. UNCERTAINTY has the same effect as opposition. The agitation of the thought, the quick turns which it makes from one view to another, the variety of passions, which succeed each other, according to the different views: All these produce an agitation in the mind; and this agitation transfuses itself into the predominant passion.

SECURITY, on the contrary, diminishes the passions. The mind, when left to itself, immediately languishes; and in order to preserve its ardour, must be every moment supported by a new flow of passion. For the same reason, despair, tho' contrary to security, has a like influence.

6. NOTHING more powerfully excites any affection than to conceal some part of its object, by throwing it into a kind of shade, which, at the same time, that it shows enough to prepossess us in favour of the object, leaves still some work for the imagination. Besides, that obscurity is always attended with a kind of uncertainty; the effort, which the fancy makes to

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compleat the idea, rouses the spirits, and gives an additional force to the passion.

7. As despair and security, tho' contrary, produce the same effects; so absence is observed to have contrary effects, and in different circumstances, either encreases or diminishes our affection. *Rochefoucault* has very well remarked, that absence destroys weak passions, but encreases strong; as the wind extinguishes a candle, but blows up a fire. Long absence naturally weakens our idea, and diminishes the passion: But where the passion is so strong and lively as to support itself, the uneasiness, arising from absence, encreases the passion, and gives it new force and influence.

8. WHEN the soul applies itself to the performance of any action, or the conception of any object, to which it is not accustomed, there is a certain unpliableness in the faculties, and a difficulty of the spirits moving in their new direction. As this difficulty excites the spirits, it is the source of wonder, surprize, and of all the emotions, which arise from novelty;  
and

and is in itself very agreeable, like every thing, which inlivenes the mind to a moderate degree. But tho' surprize be agreeable in itself, yet as it puts the spirits in agitation, it not only augments our agreeable affections, but also our painful, according to the foregoing principle. Hence every thing, that is new, is most affecting, and gives us either more pleasure or pain, than what, strictly speaking, should naturally follow from it. When it often returns upon us, the novelty wears off; the passions subside; the hurry of the spirits is over; and we survey the object with greater tranquillity.

9. THE imagination and affections have a close union together. The vivacity of the former, gives force to the latter. Hence the prospect of any pleasure, with which we are acquainted, affects us more than any other pleasure, which we may own superior, but of whose nature we are *wholly* ignorant. Of the one we can form a particular and determinate idea: The other, we conceive under the general notion of pleasure.

ANY satisfaction, which we lately enjoyed, and of which the memory is fresh and recent, operates on the will with more violence, than another of which the traces are decayed and almost obliterated.

A PLEASURE, which is suitable to the way of life, in which we are engaged, excites more our desires and appetites than another, which is foreign to it.

NOTHING is more capable of infusing any passion into the mind, than eloquence, by which objects are represented in the strongest and most lively colours. The bare opinion of another, especially when enforced with passion, will cause an idea to have an influence upon us, tho' that idea might otherwise have been entirely neglected.

IT is remarkable, that lively passions commonly attend a lively imagination. In this respect, as well as others, the force of the passion depends as much on the temper of the person, as on the nature or situation of the object.

WHAT

WHAT is distant, either in place or time, has not equal influence with what is near and contiguous.

\* \* \* \* \*

I PRETEND not here to have exhausted this subject. It is sufficient for my purpose, if I have made it appear, that, in the production and conduct of the passions, there is a certain regular mechanism, which is susceptible of as accurate a disquisition, as the laws of motion, optics, hydrostatics, or any part of natural philosophy.



DISSERTATION III.

OF

TRAGEDY.



## DISSERTATION III.

### *Of Tragedy.*

**I**T seems an unaccountable pleasure, which the spectators of a well-wrote tragedy receive from sorrow, terror, anxiety, and other passions, which are in themselves disagreeable and uneasy. The more they are touched and affected, the more are they delighted with the spectacle, and as soon as the uneasy passions cease to operate, the piece is at an end. One scene of full joy and contentment and security is the utmost, that any composition of this kind can bear; and it is sure always to be the concluding one. If in the texture of the piece, there be interwoven any scenes of satisfaction, they afford only faint gleams of pleasure, which are thrown in by way of variety, and in order to plunge the actors into deeper distress, by means of that contrast and disappointment. The whole art of the poet is employed, in rousing and supporting the compassion and indignation, the anxiety and resentment of his audience.

They

They are pleased in proportion as they are afflicted; and never are so happy as when they employ tears, sobs, and cries to give vent to their sorrow, and relieve their heart, swoln with the tenderest sympathy and compassion.

THE few critics, who have had some tincture of philosophy, have remarked this singular phenomenon, and have endeavoured to account for it.

L'ABBE *Dubos*, in his reflections on poetry and painting, asserts, that nothing is in general so disagreeable to the mind as the languid, listless state of indolence, into which it falls upon the removal of every passion and occupation. To get rid of this painful situation, it seeks every amusement and pursuit; business, gaming, shows, executions; whatever will rouse the passions, and take its attention from itself. No matter, what the passion is: Let it be disagreeable, afflicting, melancholy, disordered; it is still better, than that insipid languor, which arises from perfect tranquillity and repose.

It

It is impossible not to admit this account, as being, at least, in part satisfactory. You may observe, when there are several tables of gaming, that all the company run to those, where the deepest play is, even tho' they find not there the finest players. The view, or at least, imagination of high passions, arising from great loss or gain; affects the spectators by sympathy, gives them some touches of the same passions, and serves them for a momentary entertainment. It makes the time pass the easier with them, and is some relief to that oppression, under which men commonly labour, when left entirely to their own thoughts and meditations.

WE find, that common lyars always magnify, in their narrations, all kinds of danger, pain, distress, sickness, deaths, murders, and cruelties; as well as joy, beauty, mirth, and magnificence. It is an absurd secret, which they have for pleasing their company, fixing their attention, and attaching them to such marvellous relations, by the passions and emotions, which they excite.

THERE is, however, a difficulty of applying to the present subject, in its full extent, this solution,



lution, however ingenious and satisfactory it may appear. It is certain, that the same object of distress which pleases in a tragedy, were it really set before us, would give the most unfeigned uneasiness, tho' it be then the most effectual cure of languor and indolence. Monsieur *Fontenelle* seems to have been sensible of this difficulty; and accordingly attempts another solution of the phenomenon; at least, makes some addition to the theory abovementioned<sup>a</sup>.

“ PLEASURE and pain,” says he, “ which are  
 “ two sentiments so different in themselves,  
 “ differ not so much in their cause. From the  
 “ instance of tickling, it appears, that the  
 “ movement of pleasure pushed a little too far,  
 “ becomes pain; and that the movement of pain,  
 “ a little moderated, becomes pleasure. Hence  
 “ it proceeds, that there is such a thing as a sor-  
 “ row, soft and agreeable: It is a pain weakened  
 “ and diminished. The heart likes naturally to  
 “ be moved and affected. Melancholy objects  
 “ suit it, and even disastrous and sorrowful,  
 “ provided they are softened by some circum-  
 “ stance. It is certain, that on the theatre the  
 “ representation has almost the effect of reality;

<sup>a</sup> Reflexions sur la poetique. § 26.

“ but

“ but yet is has not altogether that effect.  
 “ However we may be hurried away by the  
 “ spectacle; whatever dominion the senses and  
 “ imagination may usurp over the reason, there  
 “ still lurks at the bottom a certain idea of  
 “ falshood in the whole of what we see. This  
 “ idea, tho' weak and disguised, suffices to di-  
 “ minish the pain which we suffer from the  
 “ misfortunes of those whom we love, and to  
 “ reduce that affliction to such a pitch as con-  
 “ verts it into a pleasure. We weep for the  
 “ misfortune of a hero, to whom we are at-  
 “ tached: In the same instant we comfort our-  
 “ selves, by reflecting, that it is nothing but a  
 “ fiction: And it is precisely, that mixture of  
 “ sentiments, which composes an agreeable  
 “ sorrow, and tears that delight us. But as  
 “ that affliction, which is caused by exterior  
 “ and sensible objects, is stronger than the con-  
 “ solation, which arises from an internal re-  
 “ flection, they are the effects and symptoms  
 “ of sorrow, which ought to prevail in the  
 “ composition.”

THIS solution seems just and convincing; but perhaps it wants still some new addition, in order to make it answer fully the phenomenon, which

which we here examine. All the passions, excited by eloquence, are agreeable in the highest degree, as well as those which are moved by painting and the theatre. The epilogues of *Cicero* are, on this account chiefly, the delight of every reader of taste; and it is difficult to read some of them without the deepest sympathy and sorrow. His merit as an orator, no doubt, depends much on his success in this particular. When he had raised tears in his judges and all his audience, they were then the most highly delighted, and expressed the greatest satisfaction with the pleader. The pathetic description of the butchery made by *Verres* of the *Sicilian* captives is a master-piece of this kind: But I believe none will affirm, that the being present at a melancholy scene of that nature would afford any entertainment. Neither is the sorrow here softened by fiction: For the audience were convinced of the reality of every circumstance. What is it then, which in this case raises a pleasure from the bosom of uneasiness, so to speak; and a pleasure, which still retains all the features and outward symptoms of distress and sorrow?

ANSWER: This extraordinary effect proceeds from that very eloquence, with which the melancholy

melancholy scene is represented. The genius required to paint objects in a lively manner, the art employed in collecting all the pathetic circumstances, the judgment displayed in disposing them; the exercise, I say, of these noble talents, along with the force of expression, and beauty of oratorical numbers, diffuse the highest satisfaction on the audience, and excite the most delightful movements. By this means, the uneasiness of the melancholy passions is not only overpowered and effaced by something stronger of an opposite kind; but the whole movement of those passions is converted into pleasure, and swells the delight, which the eloquence raises in us. The same force of oratory, employed on an uninteresting subject, would not please half so much, or rather would appear altogether ridiculous; and the mind, being left in absolute calmness and indifference, would relish none of those beauties of imagination or expression, which, if joined to passion, give it such exquisite entertainment. The impulse or vehemence, arising from sorrow, compassion, indignation, receives a new direction from the sentiments of beauty. The latter, being the predominant emotions, seize the whole mind, and convert the former into themselves, or at least, tincture them

them so strongly as totally to alter their nature: And the soul, being, at the same time, roused by passion, and charmed by eloquence, feels on the whole a strong movement, which is altogether delightful.

THE same principle takes place in tragedy; along with this addition, that tragedy is an imitation, and imitation is always of itself agreeable. This circumstance serves still farther to smooth the motions of passion, and convert the whole feeling into one uniform and strong enjoyment. Objects of the greatest terror and distress please in painting, and please more than the most beautiful objects, that appear calm and indifferent<sup>a</sup>. The affection, rousing the mind, excites a large stock of spirit and vehemence; which is all transformed into pleasure by the force of the prevailing movement. It is thus

<sup>a</sup> Painters make no scruple of representing distress and sorrow as well as any other passion: But they seem not to dwell so much on these melancholy affections as the poets, who, tho' they copy every emotion of the human breast, yet pass very quickly over the agreeable sentiments. A painter represents only one instant; and if that be passionate enough, it is sure to affect and delight the spectator: But nothing can furnish to the poet a variety of scenes and incidents and sentiments, except distress, terror, or anxiety. Compleat joy and satisfaction is attended with security, and leaves no farther room for action.

the fiction of tragedy softens the passion, by an infusion of a new feeling, not merely by weakening or diminishing the sorrow. You may by degrees weaken a real sorrow, till it totally disappears; yet in none of its gradations will it ever give pleasure; except, perhaps, by accident, to a man sunk under lethargic indolence, whom it rouses from that languid state.

To confirm this theory, it will be sufficient to produce other instances, where the subordinate movement is converted into the predominant, and gives force to it, tho' of a different; and even sometimes tho' of a contrary nature.

NOVELTY naturally excites the mind and attracts our attention; and the movements, which it causes, are always converted into any passion, belonging to the object, and join their force to it. Whether an event excites joy or sorrow, pride or shame, anger or goodwill, it is sure to produce a stronger affection, when new and unusual. And tho' novelty, of itself, be agreeable, it enforces the painful, as well as agreeable passions.

HAD you any intention to move a person extremely by the narration of any event, the best method of encreasing its effect would be artfully to delay informing him of it, and first excite his curiosity and impatience before you let him into the secret. This is the artifice, practiced by *Iago* in the famous scene of *Shakespeare*; and every spectator is sensible, that *Othello's* jealousy acquires additional force from his preceding impatience, and that the subordinate passion is here readily transformed into the predominant.

DIFFICULTIES encrease passions of every kind; and by rouzing our attention, and exciting our active powers, they produce an emotion, which nourishes the prevailing affection.

PARENTS commonly love that child most, whose sickly infirm frame of body has occasioned them the greatest pains, trouble, and anxiety in rearing him. The agreeable sentiment of affection here acquires force from sentiments of uneasiness.

NOTHING

NOTHING endears so much a friend as sorrow for his death. The pleasure of his company has not so powerful an influence.

JEALOUSY is a painful passion, yet without some share of it, the agreeable affection of love has difficulty to subsist in its full force and violence. Absence is also a great source of complaint amongst lovers, and gives them the greatest uneasiness: Yet nothing is more favorable to their mutual passion than short intervals of that kind. And if long intervals be pernicious, it is only because, thro' time, men are accustomed to them, and they cease to give uneasiness. Jealousy and absence in love compose the *dolce piccante* of the *Italians*, which they suppose so essential to all pleasure.

THERE is a fine observation of the elder *Pliny*, which illustrates the principle here insisted on. *It is very remarkable, says he, that the last works of celebrated artists, which they left imperfect, are always the most prized, such as the Iris of Aristides, the Tyndarides of Nicomachus, the Medea of Timomachus, and the Venus of Apelles. These are valued even above their finished productions: The broken lineaments*

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of

*of the piece and the half formed idea of the painter are carefully studied; and our very grief for that curious hand, which had been stoped by death, is an additional encrease to our pleasure<sup>a</sup>.*

THESE instances (and many more might be collected) are sufficient to afford us some insight into the analogy of nature, and to show us, that the pleasure, which poets, orators, and musicians give us, by exciting grief, sorrow, indignation, compassion, is not so extraordinary nor paradoxical, as it may at first sight appear. The force of imagination, the energy of expression, the power of numbers, the charms of imitation; all these are naturally, of themselves, delightful to the mind; and when the object presented lays also hold of some affection, the pleasure still rises upon us, by the conversion of this subordinate movement, into that which is predominant. The passion, tho', perhaps, naturally, and when excited by the simple appear-

<sup>a</sup> *Illud vero perquam rarum ac memoria dignum, etiam suprema opera artificum, imperfectasque tabulas, sicut, Irii Arisidii, Lyndaridas Nicomachi, Medeam Timomachi, & quam diximus Venerem Apellis, in majori admiratione esse quam perfecta. Quippe in iis lineamenta reliqua, ipsæque cogitationes artificum spectantur, atque in lenocinio commendationis dolor est manus, cum id ageret, extinctæ, lib. xxxv. c. 11.*

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ance of a real object, it may be painful; yet is so smoothed, and softened, and mollified, when raised by the finer arts, that it affords the highest entertainment.

To confirm this reasoning, we may observe, that if the movements of the imagination be not predominant above those of the passion, a contrary effect follows; and the former, being now subordinate, is converted into the latter, and still farther encreases the pain and affliction of the sufferer.

Who could ever think of it as a good expedient for comforting an afflicted parent, to exaggerate, with all the force of oratory, the irreparable loss, which he has met with by the death of a favorite child? The more power of imagination and expression you here employ, the more you encrease his despair and affliction.

THE shame, confusion, and terror of *Verres*, no doubt, rose in proportion to the noble eloquence and vehemence of *Cicero*: So also did his pain and uneasiness. These former passions were too strong for the pleasure arising from the beauties of elocution; and operated,

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tho' from the same principle, yet in a contrary manner, to the sympathy, compassion, and indignation of the audience.

LORD *Clarendon*, when he approaches the catastrophe of the royal party, supposes, that his narration must then become infinitely disagreeable; and he hurries over the King's death, without giving us one circumstance of it. He considers it as too horrid a scene to be contemplated with any satisfaction, or even without the utmost pain and aversion. He himself, as well as the readers of that age, were too deeply interested in the events, and felt a pain from subjects, which an historian and a reader of another age would regard as the most pathetic and most interesting, and by consequence, the most agreeable.

AN action, represented in tragedy, may be too bloody and atrocious. It may excite such movements of horror as will not soften into pleasure; and the greatest energy of expression bestowed on descriptions of that nature serves only to augment our uneasiness. Such is that action represented in the *ambitious Stepmother*, where a venerable old man, raised to the height

of fury and despair, rushes against a pillar, and striking his head upon it, besmears it all over with mingled brains and gore. The *English* theatre abounds too much with such images.

EVEN the common sentiments of compassion require to be softened by some agreeable affection, in order to give a thorough satisfaction to the audience. The mere suffering of plaintive virtue, under the triumphant tyranny and oppression of vice, forms a disagreeable spectacle, and is carefully avoided by all masters of the theatre. In order to dismiss the audience with entire satisfaction and contentment, the virtue must either convert itself into a noble courageous despair, or the vice receive its proper punishment.

MOST painters appear in this light to have been very unhappy in their subjects. As they wrought for churches and convents, they have chiefly represented such horrible subjects as crucifixions and martyrdoms, where nothing appears but tortures, wounds, executions, and passive suffering, without any action or affection. When they turned their pencil from this ghastly mythology, they had recourse commonly to

200 DISSERTATION III.

*Ovid*, whose fictions, tho' passionate and agreeable, are scarce natural or probable enough for painting.

THE same inversion of that principle, which is here insisted on, displays itself in common life, as in the effects of oratory and poetry. Raise to the subordinate passion that it becomes the predominant, it swallows up that affection, which it before nourished and encreased. Too much jealousy extinguishes love: Too much difficulty renders us indifferent: Too much sickness and infirmity disgusts a selfish and unkind parent.

WHAT so disagreeable as the dismal, gloomy, disastrous stories, with which melancholy people entertain their companions? The uneasy passion, being there raised alone, unaccompanied with any spirit, genius, or eloquence, conveys a pure uneasiness, and is attended with nothing that can soften it into pleasure or satisfaction.



DISSERTATION IV.

OF THE

STANDARD OF TASTE.



DISSEMINATION

of the Standard of Taste

THE great variety of Tastes, as well as of opinions, which prevail in the world, is too obvious not to have fallen under every one's observation. Men of the most confined knowledge are able to remark a difference in the narrow circle of their acquaintance, even where the persons have been educated under the same government, and have early imbibed the same prejudices. But those who can enlarge their view to contemplate distant nations and remote ages, are still more surpris'd at the great inconsistency and contradiction. We are apt to call barbarous whatever departs widely from our own taste and apprehension: But soon find the epithet of reproach retorted on us. And the highest arrogance and self-conceit is at last startled, on observing an equal assurance on all sides, and scruples, amidst such a contest of sentiments, to pronounce positively in its own favour.

As this variety of taste is obvious to the most careless enquirer; so will it be found, on examination,

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As this variety of taste is obvious to the most careless enquirer; so will it be found, on examination,



nation, to be still greater in reality than in appearance. The sentiments of men often differ with regard to beauty and deformity of all kinds, even while their general discourse is the same. There are certain terms in every language, which import blame, and others praise; and all men, who use the same tongue, must agree in their application of them. Every voice is united in applauding elegance, propriety, simplicity, spirit in writing; and in blaming fustian, affectation, coldness, and a false brilliant: But when critics come to particulars, this seeming unanimity vanishes; and it is found, that they had affixed a very different meaning to their expressions. In all matters of opinion and science, the case is opposite: The difference among men is there oftner found to lie in generals than in particulars; and to be less in reality than in appearance. An explication of the terms commonly ends the controversy; and the disputants are surprized to find, that they had been quarrelling, while at bottom they agreed in their judgment.

THOSE who found morality on sentiment, more than on reason, are inclined to comprehend ethics under the former observation, and to suppose, that in all questions, which regard conduct  
and

and manners, the difference among men is really greater than at first sight it appears. It is indeed obvious, that writers of all nations and all ages concur in applauding justice, humanity, magnanimity, prudence, veracity; and in blaming the opposite qualities. Even poets and other authors, whose compositions are chiefly calculated to please the imagination, are yet found, from *Homer* down to *Fenelon*, to inculcate the same moral precepts, and to bestow their applause and blame on the same virtues and vices. This great unanimity is usually ascribed to the influence of plain reason; which, in all these cases, maintains similar sentiments in all men, and prevents those controversies, to which the abstract sciences are so much exposed. So far as the unanimity is real, the account may be admitted as satisfactory: But it must also be allowed, that some part of the seeming harmony in morals may be accounted for from the very nature of language. The word, *virtue*, with its equivalent in every tongue, implies praise; as that of *vice* does blame: And no one, without the most obvious and grossest impropriety, could affix reproach to a term, which in general use is understood in a good sense; or bestow applause, where the idiom requires disapprobation. *Homer's*

general precepts, where he delivers any such, will never be controverted; but it is very obvious, that when he draws particular pictures of manners, and represents heroism in *Achilles* and prudence in *Ulysses*, he intermixes a much greater degree of ferocity in the former, and of cunning and fraud in the latter, than *Fenelon* would admit of. The sage *Ulysses* in the *Greek* poet seems to delight in lies and fictions, and often employs them without any necessity or even advantage: But his more scrupulous son in the *French* epic writer exposes himself to the most imminent perils, rather than depart from the exactest line of truth and veracity.

THE admirers and followers of the *Alcoran* insist very much on the excellent moral precepts, which are interspersed throughout that wild performance. But it is to be supposed, that the *Arabic* words, which correspond to the *English*, equity, justice, temperance, meekness, charity, were such as, from the constant use of that tongue, must always be taken in a good sense; and it would have argued the greatest ignorance, not of morals, but of language, to have mentioned them with any epithets, besides those of applause and approbation. But would we know, whether

whether the pretended prophet had really attained a just sentiment of morals? Let us attend to his narration; and we shall soon find, that he bestows praise on such instances of treachery, inhumanity, cruelty, revenge, bigotry, as are utterly incompatible with civilized society. No steady rule of right seems there to be attended to; and every action is blamed or praised, so far only as it is beneficial or hurtful to the true believers.

THE merit of delivering true general precepts in ethics is indeed very small. Whoever recommends any moral virtues, really does no more than is implied in the terms themselves. The people, who invented the word *modesty*, and used it in a good sense, inculcated more clearly and much more efficaciously, the precept, *be modest*, than any pretended legislator or prophet, who should insert such a *maxim* in his writings. Of all expressions, those, which, together with their other meaning, imply a degree either of blame or approbation, are the least liable to be perverted or mistaken.

It is very natural for us to seek a *Standard of Taste*; a rule, by which the various sentiments of men may be reconciled; or at least, a de-

cession afforded, confirming one sentiment, and condemning another.

THERE is a species of philosophy, which cuts off all hopes of success in such an attempt, and represents the impossibility of ever attaining any standard of taste. The difference, it is said, is very wide between judgment and sentiment. All sentiment is right; because sentiment has a reference to nothing beyond itself, and is always real, wherever a man is conscious of it. But all determinations of the understanding are not right; because they have a reference to something beyond themselves, to wit, real matter of fact; and are not always conformable to that standard. Among a thousand different opinions which different men may entertain of the same subject, there is one, and but one, that is just and true; and the only difficulty is to fix and ascertain it. On the contrary, a thousand different sentiments, excited by the same object, are all right: Because no sentiment represents what is really in the object. It only marks a certain conformity or relation betwixt the object and the organs or faculties of the mind; and if that conformity did not really exist, the sentiment could never possibly have a being. Beauty is no  
quality

quality in things themselves: It exists merely in the mind which contemplates them; and each mind perceives a different beauty. One person may even perceive deformity, where another is sensible of beauty; and every individual ought to acquiesce in his own sentiment, without pretending to regulate those of others. To seek the real beauty, or real deformity is as fruitless an enquiry, as to pretend to ascertain the real sweet or real bitter. According to the disposition of the organs, the same object may be both sweet and bitter; and the proverb has justly determined it to be fruitless to dispute concerning tastes. It is very natural, and even quite necessary, to extend this axiom to mental, as well as bodily taste; and thus common sense, which is so often at variance with philosophy, especially with the sceptical kind, is found, in one instance at least, to agree in pronouncing the same decision.

BUT though this axiom, by passing into a proverb, seems to have attained the sanction of common sense; there is certainly a species of common sense which opposes it, or at least serves to modify and restrain it. Whoever would assert an equality of genius and elegance betwixt

*Ogilby* and *Milton*, or *Bunyan* and *Addison*, would be thought to defend no less an extravagance, than if he had maintained a molehill to be as high as *Teneriffe*, or a pond as extensive as the ocean. Though there may be found persons, who give the preference to the former authors; no one pays attention to such a taste; and we pronounce without scruple the sentiment of these pretended critics to be absurd and ridiculous. The principle of the natural equality of tastes is then totally forgot; and while we admit of it on some occasions, where the objects seem near an equality, it appears an extravagant paradox, or rather a palpable absurdity, where objects so disproportioned are compared together.

It is evident, that none of the rules of composition are fixed by reasonings *a priori*, or can be esteemed abstract conclusions of the understanding, from comparing those habitudes and relations of ideas, which are eternal and immutable. Their foundation is the same with that of all the practical sciences, experience; nor are they any thing but general observations, concerning what has been universally found to please in all countries and in all ages. Many of the beauties of poetry and even of eloquence

are founded on falsehood and fiction, on hyperboles, metaphors, and an abuse or perversion of expressions from their natural meaning. To check the fallies of the imagination, and to reduce every expression to geometrical truth and exactness, would be the most contrary to the laws of criticism; because it would produce a work, which, by universal experience has been found the most insipid and disagreeable. But though poetry can never submit to exact truth, it must be confined by rules of art, discovered to the author either by genius or observation. If some negligent or irregular writers have pleased, they have not pleased by their transgressions of rule or order, but in spite of these transgressions. They have possessed other beauties, which were conformable to just criticism; and the force of these beauties has been able to overpower censure, and give the mind a satisfaction superior to the disgust arising from the blemishes. *Aristo* pleases; but not by his monstrous and improbable fictions, by his bizarre mixture of the serious and comic styles, by the want of coherence in his stories, or by the continual interruptions of his narration. He charms by the force and clearness of his expression, by the readiness and variety of his inventions, and by his natural

pictures of the passions, especially those of the gay and amorous kind: And however his faults may diminish our satisfaction, they are not able entirely to destroy it. Did our pleasure really arise from those parts of his poem, which we denominate faults, this would be no objection to criticism in general: It would only be an objection to those particular rules of criticism, which would establish such circumstances to be faults, and would represent them as universally blameable. If they are found to please, they cannot be faults; let the pleasure, which they produce, be ever so unexpected and unaccountable.

But though all the general rules of art are founded only on experience and on the observation of the common sentiments of human nature, we must not imagine, that, on every occasion, the feelings of men will be conformable to these rules. Those finer emotions of the mind are of a very tender and delicate nature, and require the concurrence of many favourable circumstances to make them play with facility and exactness, according to their general and established principles. The least exterior hindrance to such small springs, or the least internal disorder,

order, disturbs their motion, and confounds the operation of the whole machine. When we would make an experiment of this nature, and would try the force of any beauty or deformity, we must choose with care a proper time and place, and bring the fancy to a suitable situation and disposition. A perfect serenity of mind, a recollection of thought, a due attention to the object; if any of these circumstances be wanting our experiment will be fallacious, and we shall be unable to judge of the catholic and universal beauty. The relation, which nature has placed betwixt the form and the sentiment, will at least be more obscure; and it will require greater accuracy to trace and discern it. We shall be able to ascertain its influence not so much from the operation of each particular beauty, as from the durable admiration, which attends those works, that have survived all the caprices of mode and fashion, all the mistakes of ignorance and envy.

THE same *Homer*, who pleased at *Athens* and *Rome* two thousand years ago, is still admired at *Paris* and at *London*. All the changes of climate, government, religion, and language have not been able to obscure his glory. Authority

thority or prejudice may give a temporary vogue to a bad poet or orator; but his reputation will never be durable or general. When his compositions are examined by posterity or by foreigners, the enchantment is dissipated, and his faults appear in their true colours. On the contrary, a real genius, the longer his works endure, and the more wide they are spread, the more sincere is the admiration which he meets with. Envy and jealousy have too much place in a narrow circle; and even familiar acquaintance with his person may diminish the applause due to his performances: But when these obstructions are removed, the beauties, which are naturally fitted to excite agreeable sentiments immediately display their energy; and while the world endures, they maintain their authority over the minds of men.

It appears then, that amidst all the variety and caprices of taste, there are certain general principles of approbation or blame, whose influence a careful eye may trace in all operations of the mind. Some particular forms or qualities, from the original structure of the internal fabric, are calculated to please, and others to displease; and if they fail of their effect in any particular instance,

instance, it is from some apparent defect or imperfection in the organ. A man in a fever would not insist on his palate as able to decide concerning flavours; nor would one, affected with the jaundice, pretend to give a verdict with regard to colours. In each creature, there is a sound and a defective state; and the former alone can be supposed to afford us a true standard of taste and sentiment. If in the sound state of the organs, there be an entire or a considerable uniformity of sentiment among men, we may thence derive an idea of the perfect and universal beauty; in like manner as the appearance of objects in day-light to the eye of a man in health is denominated their true and real colour, even while colour is allowed to be merely a phantasm of the senses.

MANY and frequent are the defects in the internal organs, which prevent or weaken the influence of those general principles, on which depends our sentiment of beauty or deformity. Though some objects, by the structure of the mind, be naturally calculated to give pleasure, it is not to be expected, that in every individual the pleasure will be equally felt. Particular incidents and situations occur, which either throw  
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a false light on the objects, or hinder the true from conveying to the imagination the proper sentiment and perception.

ONE obvious cause, why many feel not the proper sentiment of beauty, is the want of that delicacy of imagination, which is requisite to convey a sensibility of those finer emotions. This delicacy every one pretends to: Every one talks of it; and would reduce every kind of taste or sentiment to its standard. But as our intention in this dissertation is to mingle some light of the understanding with the feelings of sentiment, it will be proper to give a more accurate definition of delicacy, than has hitherto been attempted. And not to draw our philosophy from too profound a source, we shall have recourse to a noted story in *Don Quixote*.

'Tis with good reason, says *Sancho* to the squire with the great nose, that I pretend to have a judgment in wine: This is a quality hereditary in our family. Two of my kinsmen were once called to give their opinion of a hog'shead, which was supposed to be excellent, being old and of a good vintage. One of them tastes it; considers it, and after mature reflection pro-

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nounces the wine to be good, were it not for a small taste of leather, which he perceived in it. The other, after using the same precautions, gives also his verdict in favour of the wine; but with the reserve of a taste of iron, which he could easily distinguish. You cannot imagine how much they were both ridiculed for their judgment. But who laughed in the end? On emptying the hog'shead, there was found at the bottom, an old key with a leathern thong tied to it.

THE great resemblance between mental and bodily taste will easily teach us to apply this story. Though it be certain, that beauty and deformity, no more than sweet and bitter, are not qualities in objects, but belong entirely to the sentiment, internal or external; it must be allowed, that there are certain qualities in objects, which are fitted by nature to produce those particular feelings. Now as these qualities may be found in a small degree or may be mixt and confounded with each other, it often happens, that the taste is not affected with such minute qualities, or is not able to distinguish all the particular flavours, amidst the disorder, in which they are presented. Where the organs are so fine, as to allow nothing

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to escape them; and at the same time so exact as to perceive every ingredient in the composition: This we call delicacy of taste, whether we employ these terms in the natural or metaphorical sense. Here then the general rules of beauty are of use; being drawn from established models, and from the observation of what pleases or displeases, when presented singly and in a high degree: And if the same qualities, in a continued composition and in a smaller degree, affect not the organs with a sensible delight or uneasiness, we exclude the person from all pretensions to this delicacy. To produce these general rules or avowed patterns of composition is like finding the key with the leathern thong; which justified the verdict of *Sancho's* kinsmen, and confounded those pretended judges, who had condemned them. Though the hog'shead had never been emptied, the taste of the one was still equally delicate, and that of the other equally dull and languid: But it would have been more difficult to have proved the superiority of the former, to the conviction of every by-stander. In like manner, though the beauties of writing had never been methodized, or reduced to general principles; though no excellent models had ever been acknowledged; the different degrees

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of taste would still have subsisted, and the judgment of one man been preferable to that of another; but it would not have been so easy to silence the bad critic, who might always insist upon his particular sentiment, and refuse to submit to his antagonist. But when we show him an avowed principle of art; when we illustrate this principle by examples, whose operation, from his own particular taste, he acknowledges to be conformable to the principle; when we prove, that the same principle may be applied to the present case, where he did not perceive nor feel its influence: He must conclude, upon the whole, that the fault lies in himself, and that he wants the delicacy, which is requisite to make him sensible of every beauty and every blemish, in any composition or discourse.

It is acknowledged to be the perfection of every sense or faculty, to perceive with exactness its most minute objects, and allow nothing to escape its notice and observation. The smaller the objects are, which become sensible to the eye, the finer is that organ, and the more elaborate its make and composition. A good palate is not tried by strong flavours; but by a mixture of small ingredients, where we are still sensible

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of each part, notwithstanding its minuteness and its confusion with the rest. In like manner, a quick and acute perception of beauty and deformity must be the perfection of our mental taste, nor can a man be satisfied with himself, while he suspects, that any excellence or blemish in a discourse has passed him unobserved. In this case, the perfection of the man, and the perfection of the sense or feeling, are found to be united. A very delicate palate, on many occasions, may be a great inconvenience both to a man himself and to his friends; but a delicate taste of wit or beauty must always be a desirable quality; because it is the source of all the finest and most innocent enjoyments, of which human nature is susceptible. In this decision, the sentiments of all mankind are agreed. Wherever you can fix or ascertain a delicacy of taste, it is sure to be approved of; and the best way of fixing it is to appeal to those models and principles, which have been established by the uniform approbation and experience of nations and ages.

BUT though there be naturally a very wide difference in point of delicacy between one person and another, nothing tends further to encrease and improve this talent, than *practice* in a particular

ticular art, and the frequent survey or contemplation of a particular species of beauty. When objects of any kind are first presented to the eye or imagination, the sentiment, which attends them, is obscure and confused: and the mind is, in a great measure, incapable of pronouncing concerning their merits or defects. The taste cannot perceive the several excellencies of the performance; much less distinguish the particular character of each excellency, and ascertain its quality and degree. If it pronounce the whole in general to be beautiful or deformed 'tis the utmost which can be expected; and even this judgment a person, so unpractised, will be apt to deliver with great hesitation and reserve. But allow him to acquire experience in those objects, his feeling becomes more exact and nice: He not only perceives the beauties and defects of each part, but marks the distinguishing species of each quality, and assigns it suitable praise or blame. A clear and distinct sentiment attends him through the whole survey of the objects; and he discerns that very degree and kind of approbation or displeasure, which each part is naturally fitted to produce. The mist dissipates, which seemed formerly to hang over the object: The organ acquires greater

greater perfection in its operations; and can pronounce, without danger of mistake, concerning the merits of each performance. In a word, the same address and dexterity, which practice gives to the execution of any work, is also acquired, by the same means, in the judging of it.

So advantageous is practice to the discernment of beauty, that before we can pronounce judgment on any work of importance, it will even be requisite, that that very individual performance be more than once perused by us, and be surveyed in different lights, with attention and deliberation. There is a flutter or hurry of thought, which attends the first perusal of any piece, and which confounds the genuine sentiment of beauty. The reference of the parts is not discerned: The true characters of style are little distinguished: The several perfections and defects seem wrapped up in a species of confusion, and present themselves indistinctly to the imagination. Not to mention, that there is a species of beauty, which, as it is florid and superficial, pleases at first; but being found incompatible with a just expression either of reason or passion, soon falls upon the taste, and is then rejected with disdain, at least rated at a much lower value. IT

IT is impossible to continue in the practice of contemplating any order of beauty, without being frequently obliged to form *comparisons* between the several species and degrees of excellency, and estimating their proportion to each other. A man, who has had no opportunity of comparing the different kinds of beauty, is indeed totally unqualified to pronounce an opinion with regard to any object presented to him. By comparison alone we fix the epithets of praise or blame, and learn how to assign the due degree of each. The coarsest dawbing of a sign-post contains a certain lustre of colours and exactness of imitation, which are so far beauties, and would affect the mind of a peasant or Indian with the highest admiration. The most vulgar ballads are not entirely destitute of harmony or nature; and none but a person, familiarized to superior beauties, would pronounce their numbers harsh, or narration uninteresting. A great inferiority of beauty gives pain to a person conversant in the highest excellency of the kind, and is for that reason pronounced a deformity: As the most finished object, with which we are acquainted, is naturally supposed to have reached the pinnacle of perfection, and to be entitled to the highest applause.

plause. A man who has had opportunities of seeing, and examining, and weighing the several performances, admired in different ages and nations, can alone rate the merits of a work exhibited to his view, and assign its proper rank among the productions of genius.

BUT to enable him the more fully to execute this undertaking, he must preserve his mind free from all *prejudice*, and allow nothing to enter into his consideration, but the very object, which is submitted to his examination. We may observe, that every work of art, in order to produce its due effect on the mind, must be surveyed in a certain point of view, and cannot be fully relished by persons, whose situation, real or imaginary, is not conformable to that required by the performance. An orator addresses himself to a particular audience, and must have a regard to their particular genius, interests, opinions, passions, and prejudices; otherwise he hopes in vain to govern their resolutions, and inflame their affections. Should they even have entertained some prepossessions against him, however unreasonable, he must not overlook this disadvantage; but before he enters upon the subject, must endeavour to conciliate their affection, and acquire their

their good graces. A critic of a different age or nation, who should peruse this discourse, must have all these circumstances in his eye, and must place himself in the same situation as the audience, in order to form a true judgment of the oration. In like manner, when any work is addressed to the public, though I should have a friendship or enmity with the author, I must depart from this particular situation; and considering myself as a man in general, forget, if possible, my individual being and my peculiar circumstances. A person, influenced by prejudice, complies not with this condition; but obstinately maintains his natural position, without entering into that required by the performance. If the work be addressed to persons of a different age or nation, he makes no allowance for their peculiar views and prejudices; but full of the manners of his own times, rashly condemns what seemed admirable in the eyes of those for whom alone the discourse was calculated. If the work be executed for the public, he never sufficiently enlarges his comprehension, or forgets his interests as a friend or enemy, as a rival or commentator. By this means, his sentiments are perverted; nor have the same beauties and blemishes the same influence upon him, as if he had imposed a proper

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violence on his imagination, and had forgot himself for a moment. So far his taste evidently departs from the true standard; and of consequence loses all credit and authority.

It is well known, that, in all questions, submitted to the understanding, prejudice is most destructive of sound judgment, and perverts all operations of the intellectual faculties: It is no less contrary to good taste; nor has it less influence to corrupt our sentiments of beauty. It belongs to *good sense* to check its influence in both cases; and in this respect, as well as in many others, reason, if not an essential part of taste, is at least requisite to the operations of this latter faculty. In all the nobler productions of genius, there is a mutual relation and correspondence of parts; nor can either the beauties or blemishes be perceived by him, whose thought is not capacious enough to comprehend all those parts, and compare them with each other, in order to perceive the consistence and uniformity of the whole. Every work of art has also a certain end or purpose, for which it is calculated; and is to be deemed more or less perfect, as it is more or less fitted to attain this end. The object of eloquence is to persuade, of history to instruct, of poetry to please

please by means of the passions and the imagination. These ends we must carry constantly in our view, when we peruse any performance; and we must be able to judge how far the means employed are adapted to their respective purposes. Besides, every kind of composition, even the most poetical, is nothing but a chain of propositions and reasonings; not always indeed the justest and most exact, but still plausible and specious, however disguised by the colouring of the imagination. The persons, introduced in tragedy and epic poetry, must be represented as reasoning and thinking, and concluding and acting, suitable to their characters and circumstances; and without judgment, as well as taste and invention, a poet can never hope to succeed in so delicate an undertaking. Not to mention, that the same excellence of faculties which contributes to the improvement of reason, the same clearness of conception, the same exactness of distinction, the same vivacity of apprehension, are essential to the operations of true taste, and are its infallible concomitants. It seldom, or never happens, that a man of sense, who has experience in any art, cannot judge of its beauty; and it is no less rare to meet with a man, who has a just taste, without a sound understanding.

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Thus, though the principles of taste be universal, and nearly, if not entirely the same in all men; yet few are qualified to give judgment on any work of art, or establish their own sentiment as the standard of beauty. The organs of internal sensation are seldom so perfect as to allow the general principles their full play, and produce a feeling correspondent to those principles. They either labour under some defect, or are vitiated by some disorder; and by that means, excite a sentiment, which may be pronounced erroneous. When the critic has no delicacy, he judges without any distinction, and is only affected by the grosser and more palpable qualities of the object: The finer touches pass unnoticed and disregarded. Where he is not aided by practice, his verdict is attended with confusion and hesitation. Where no comparison has been employed, the most frivolous beauties, such as rather merit the name of defects, are the objects of his admiration. Where he lies under the influence of prejudice, all his natural sentiments are perverted. Where good sense is wanting, he is not qualified to discern the beauties of design and reasoning, which are the highest and most excellent. Under some or other of these

imperfections, the generality of men labour; and hence a true judge in the finer arts is observed, even during the most polished ages, to be so rare a character: Strong sense, united to delicate sentiment, improved by practice, perfected by comparison, and cleared of all prejudice, can alone entitle critics to this valuable character; and the joint verdict of such, wherever they are to be found, is the true standard of taste and beauty.

BUT where are such critics to be found? By what marks are they to be known? How distinguish them from pretenders? These questions are embarrassing; and seem to throw us back into the same uncertainty, from which, during the course of this dissertation, we have endeavoured to extricate ourselves.

BUT if we consider the matter aright, these are questions of fact, not of sentiment. Whether any particular person be endowed with good sense and a delicate imagination, free from prejudice, may often be the subject of dispute, and be liable to great discussion and enquiry: But that such a character is valuable and estimable will be agreed by all mankind. Where these

doubts occur, men can do no more than in other disputable questions, which are submitted to the understanding: They must produce the best arguments, which their invention suggests to them; they must acknowledge a true and decisive standard to exist somewhere, to wit, real existence and matter of fact; and they must have indulgence to such as differ from them in their appeals to this standard. It is sufficient for our present purpose, if we have proved, that the taste of all individuals is not upon an equal footing, and that some men in general, however difficult to be particularly pitched upon, will be acknowledged by universal sentiment to have a preference above others.

BUT in reality the difficulty of finding, even in particulars, the standard of taste, is not so great as is represented. Though in speculation, we may readily avow a certain criterion in science and deny it in sentiment, the matter is found in practice to be much more hard to ascertain in the former case than in the latter. Theories of abstract philosophy, systems of profound theology have prevailed during one age: In a successive period, these have been universally exploded: Their absurdity has been detected: Other theo-

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ries and systems have supplied their place, which again gave way to their successors: And nothing has been experienced more liable to the revolutions of chance and fashion than these pretended decisions of science. The case is not the same with the beauties of eloquence and poetry. Just expressions of passion and nature are sure, after a little time, to gain public vogue, which they maintain for ever. *Aristotle* and *Plato*, and *Epicurus* and *Descartes*, may successively yield to each other: But *Terence* and *Virgil* maintain an universal, undisputed empire over the minds of men. The abstract philosophy of *Cicero* has lost its credit: The vehemence of his oratory is still the object of our admiration.

THOUGH men of delicate taste are rare, they are easily to be distinguished in society, by the soundness of their understanding and the superiority of their faculties above the rest of mankind. The ascendant, which they acquire, gives a prevalence to that lively approbation, with which they receive any productions of genius, and renders it generally predominant. Many men, when left to themselves, have but a faint and dubious perception of beauty, who yet are capable of relishing any fine stroke, which is pointed out to them. Every convert to the ad-

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miration of the true poet or orator is the cause of some new conversion. And though prejudices may prevail for a time, they never unite in celebrating any rival to the true genius, but yield at last to the force of nature and just sentiment. And thus though a civilized nation may easily be mistaken in the choice of their admired philosopher, they never have been found long to err in their affection for a favourite epic or tragic author.

BUT notwithstanding all our endeavours to fix a standard of taste, and reconcile the various apprehensions of men, there still remain two sources of variation, which, tho' they be not sufficient to confound all the boundaries of beauty and deformity, will often serve to vary the degrees of our approbation or blame. The one is the different humours of particular men; the other, the particular manners and opinions of our age and country. The general principles of taste are uniform in human nature: Where men vary in their judgments, some defect or perversion in the faculties may commonly be remarked; proceeding either from prejudice, from want of practice, or want of delicacy; and there is just reason for approving one taste and condemning another. But where there is such a diversity in the internal frame or external situation as is en-

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tirely blameless on both sides, and leaves no room to give one the preference above the other; in that case a certain diversity of judgment is unavoidable, and we seek in vain for a standard, by which we can reconcile the contrary sentiments.

A young man, whose passions are warm, will be more sensibly touched with amorous and tender images, than a man more advanced in years who takes pleasure in wise and philosophical perfections concerning the conduct of life and moderation of the passions. At twenty, *Ovid* may be the favourite author; *Horace* at forty; and perhaps *Tacitus* at fifty. Vainly would we, in such cases, endeavour to enter into the sentiments of others, and divest ourselves of those propensities, which are natural to us. We chuse our favourite author as we do our friend, from a conformity of humours and dispositions. Mirth or passion, sentiment or reflection; which ever of these most predominates in our temper, it gives us a peculiar sympathy with the writer, who resembles us.

ONE person is more pleased with the sublime; another with the tender; a third with raillery. One has a strong sensibility to blemishes, and is extremely studious of correctness. Another has

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a more lively feeling of beauties, and pardons twenty absurdities and defects for one elevated or pathetic stroke. The ear of this man is entirely turned towards conciseness and energy; that man is delighted with a copious, rich, and harmonious expression. Simplicity is affected by one; ornament by another. Comedy, tragedy, satire, odes have each their partizans, who prefer that particular species of writing to all others. It is plainly an error in a critic to confine his approbation to one species or style of writing and condemn all the rest. But it is almost impossible not to feel a predilection for that which suits our particular turn and disposition. Such preferences are innocent and unavoidable, and can never reasonably be the object of dispute, because there is no standard, by which they can be decided.

For a like reason, we are more pleased with pictures of characters, which resemble such as are found in our own age or country, than with those which describe a different set of customs. 'Tis not without some effort, that we reconcile ourselves to the simplicity of antient manners, and behold princesses drawing water from a spring, and kings and heroes dressing their own victuals. We may allow in general, that the representation of such manners is no fault in the author, nor deformity in the piece; but we are not

not so sensibly touched with them. For this reason, comedy is not transferred easily from one age or nation to another. A *Frenchman* or *Englishman* is not pleased with the *Andria* of *Terence*, or *Clitæ* of *Machiavel*, where the fine lady, upon whom all the play turns, never once appears to the spectators, but is always kept behind the scenes, suitable to the reserved humour of the antient *Greeks* and modern *Italians*. A man of learning and reflection can make allowance for these peculiarities of manners; but a common audience can never divest themselves so far of their usual ideas and sentiments as to relish pictures which no way resemble them.

AND here there occurs a reflection, which may, perhaps, be useful in examining the celebrated controversy concerning antient and modern learning; where we often find the one side excusing any seeming absurdity in the antients from the manners of the age, and the others refusing to admit this excuse, or at least, admitting it only as an apology for the author, not for the performance. In my opinion, the proper bounds in this subject have seldom been fixed between the contending parties. Where any innocent peculiarities of manners are represented, such as those abovementioned, they ought certainly



tainly to be admitted; and a man who is shocked with them, gives an evident proof of false delicacy and refinement. The poets *monument, more durable than brass*, must fall to the ground like common bricks or clay, were men to make no allowance for the continual revolutions of manners and customs, and would admit nothing but what was suitable to the prevailing fashion. Must we throw aside the pictures of our ancestors, because of their ruffs and fardingales? But where the ideas of morality and decency alter from one age to another, and where vicious manners are described, without being marked with the proper characters of blame and disapprobation; this must be allowed to disfigure the poem, and to be a real deformity. I cannot, nor is it proper I should, enter into such sentiments; and however I may excuse the poet, on account of the manners of his age, I never can relish the composition. The want of humanity and of decency, so conspicuous in the characters drawn by several of the antient poets, even sometimes by *Homer* and the *Greek* tragedians, diminishes considerably the merit of their noble performances, and gives modern authors a great advantage over them. We are not interested in the fortunes and sentiments of such rough heroes: We are displeas'd to find the limits of vice and virtue so

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confounded: And whatever indulgence we may give the writer on account of his prejudices, we cannot prevail on ourselves to enter into his sentiments, or bear an affection to characters, which we plainly discover to be blameable.

THE case is not the same with moral principles as with speculative opinions of any kind. These are in continual flux and revolution. The son embraces a different system from the father. Nay, there scarce is any man, who can boast of great constancy and uniformity in this particular. Whatever speculative errors may be found in the polite writings of any age or country, they detract but little from the value of those compositions. There needs but a certain turn of thought or imagination to make us enter into all the opinions, which then prevailed, and relish the sentiments or conclusions derived from them. But a very violent effort is requisite to change our judgment of manners, and excite sentiments of approbation or blame, love or hatred, different from those to which the mind from long custom has been familiarized. And where a man is confident of the rectitude of that moral standard, by which he judges, he is justly jealous of it, and will not pervert the sentiments of his heart for a moment, in complaisance to any writer whatever.

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OF all speculative errors, those which regard religion, are the most excusable in compositions of genius; nor is it ever permitted to judge of the civility or wisdom of any people, or even of single persons, by the grossness or refinement of their theological principles. The same good sense, that directs men in the ordinary occurrences of life, is not hearkened to in religious matters, which are supposed to be placed entirely above the cognizance of human reason. Upon this account, all the absurdities of the pagan system of theology must be overlooked by every critic, who would pretend to form a just notion of antient poetry; and our posterity, in their turn, must have the same indulgence to their forefathers. No religious principles can ever be imputed as a fault to any poet, while they remain merely principles, and take not such strong possession of his heart, as to lay him under the imputation of *bigotry* or *superstition*. Where that happens, they confound the sentiments of morality and alter the natural boundaries of vice and virtue. They are therefore eternal blemishes, according to the principle abovementioned; nor are the prejudices and false opinions of the age sufficient to justify them.

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'Tis essential to the *Roman* catholic religion to inspire a violent hatred to every other worship, and represent all pagans, mahometans, and heretics as the objects of divine wrath and vengeance. Such sentiments, though they are in reality extremely blameable, are considered as virtues by the zealots of that communion, and are represented in their tragedies and epic poems as a kind of divine heroism. This bigotry has disfigured two very fine tragedies of the *French* theatre, *Polieucte* and *Athalie*; where an intemperate zeal for particular modes of worship is set off with all the pomp imaginable, and forms the predominant character of the heroes. "What is this," says the heroic *Joad* to *Josabet*, finding her in discourse with *Mattan*, the priest of *Baal*, "Does the daughter of *David* speak to this traitor? Are you not afraid, lest the earth should open and pour forth flames to devour you both? Or that these holy walls should fall and crush you together? What is his purpose? Why comes that enemy of God hither to poison the air, which we breath, with his horrid presence?" Such sentiments are received with great applause on the theatre of *Paris*; but at *London* the spectators would be full as much pleased to hear *Achilles* tell *Agamemnon*, that he

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was

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was a dog in his forehead and a deer in his heart,  
or *Jupiter* threaten *Juno* with a sound drubbing,  
if she will not be quiet.

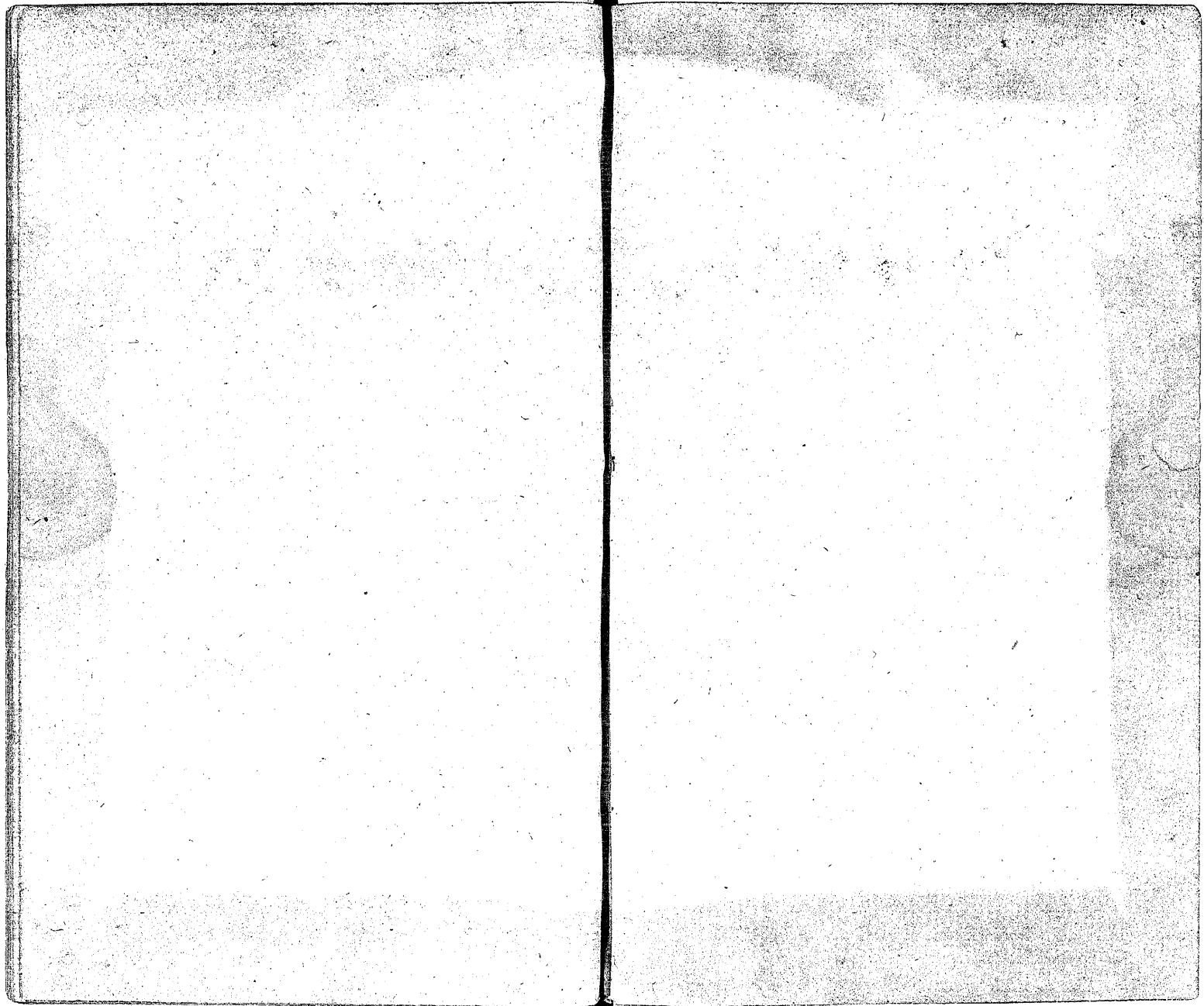
RELIGIOUS principles are also a blemish in  
any polite composition, when they rise up to su-  
perstition, and intrude themselves into every  
sentiment, however remote from any connection  
with religion. 'Tis no excuse for the poet, that  
the customs of his country had burthened life  
with so many religious ceremonies and obser-  
vances, that no part of it was exempt from that  
yolk. It must be for ever ridiculous in *Petrarch*  
to compare his mistress, *Laura*, to *Jesus Christ*.  
Nor is it less ridiculous in that agreeable liber-  
tine, *Boccace*, very seriously to give thanks to  
God Almighty, and the ladies, for their assistance  
in defending him against his enemies.

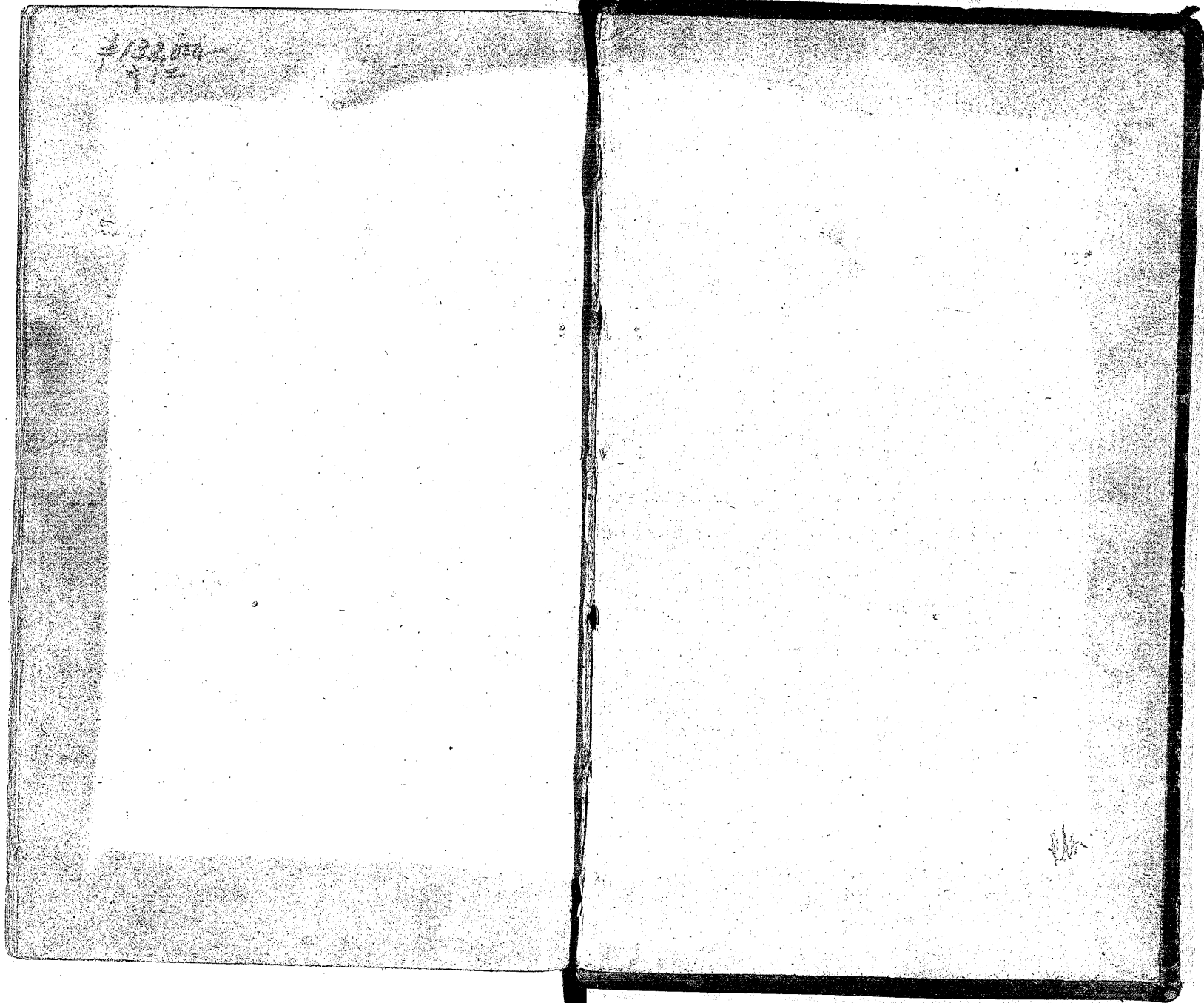
F I N I S.

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E R R A T A.

P. 7. L. 13. r. *set*. P. 9. L. 12. r. *be buried*.  
P. 42. L. 5. r. *conditions*. P. 70. L. 4. from the  
Bottom, read *foretel the issue*. P. 116. L. 16. read  
*corrupt*.





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